A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

Horace Gregory: *The Breathing Dial*

Kay Boyle: *Wanderer*

W. M. Frohock: *Celine's Quest for Love*

Helen Eustis
Marya Zaturenska
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Ben Field: *An Answer for My Uncle*
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A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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HORACE GREGORY:

The Breathing Dial

Time burns
within the bronze-
Green dial,
is the sun's
Hand quickening
Day-Spring in June
To midnight's deep December:

Always the slender
Pointing shadow within the flame
The face of time
That warns, This is the hour
You shall remember
And shall hear
Your own lips saying,
"As in this light we stand,
All lesser fires perish:
nor wind, nor storm
Scatter its heat
Within the sleepless heart!"

The flame-crossed dial
Stirs

In chapels of the secret-
Flowering breast
where choiring voices join
Serpent and vine,
laurel and hemlock
And field-scented clover,
And as the song dies
A child's face leans over
The river-mirrored, trembling asphodel.

The vision vanishes as the dial stirs
And quiet enters
beneath the branches
Of that fragrant fiery tree
Whose veins shed light
Through circling hemispheres
Bearing their fruit in heaven
As in each heart.
This is the place
Where all loves meet:
The naked pulse beat
Where the altars rise,
the blood-crowned sacrifice
Seen in the glances,
in the stilled
Amber-lighted faces
Of boys at prayer,
Of girls at their devotions
who read their destiny
In one another's eyes.

See in the fire that lives
Upon an open hearth
the reflected hour
Of a flaming dial:
There the renewal
Of sun and earth that burns away
Birth-mark and stain,
Gray lips and winnowed hair,
The wild, dark, aged, distracted eye
Seen in a glass
That says,
"The sin was not my sin;

I am not guilty.
Where, where
Is that young face I used to wear?
Is it the shadow of a cloud
That has already passed across the sky?
Where shall I turn?
Are my limbs ashes
To be lost forever
Among the fragments of a broken urn?"

Beyond the cries of age and loss
Know grace that falls
In sunlit air,
Spirit and body joined,
Life within light:
Even behind
The murmuring darkness of a locked
Vine-covered iron door
The vision breathes, glows in the image
Of a child's hand raised through night,
The index finger pointed to a star.

As the flame rises to flood tides of noon
(Midsummer's hour
Of encircling gold within gold
Flowing
Between the shadows of tall trees
Field lawn and flower
Brimmed with radiance that memory cannot hold)
No hand can stay its motion,
it is gone
Until tomorrow wakes another sun.

Know that time lives only
As the heart stirs,
Waking the spirit between the silences,
Between the rumors of air-riding, sea-driven wars,
Between the fallen moments, hours, years
Of a blind century that walks in blood,
Its voices heard
In sleep, in the dreaded silence
Of the unblessed dead

That is broken only by the sight of tears.

Even as the voices of the dead are stilled,
So a single voice wakes light among the living:
Thou breathing dial!
(The flush-tinted rose
Concealed within the heart
Opens the darkest hill,
the deepest valley
To the first sight of dawn.)

Even as we wait,
the pale-starred Easter morning
Resumes the course of years,
Of seasons run,
Even in the stillness of an empty street,
Doors closed, the shutters drawn,
The voice is heard,

"*Lumen me regit*—look where I stand,
Vos umbra where the body enters earth,
Falls, rises beyond death in moon-lit waters
Following the tide that journeys toward the sun.
I am the light
is the first cry at birth."

HELEN EUSTIS:

The Legend of Henessy's Ark

Old man Henessy came back into town cursing and swearing because he couldn't find anybody to carry his bag up from the station. When he got to what used to be Mrs. Parker's boarding house, he was buzzing with rage and just had the strength to fall into a rocker. Miss Nellie Lord, who had inherited the business from her Aunt Jane Parker twenty years ago, didn't have the courage to tell him who she was when he called her Mrs. Parker. She was afraid he'd die of apoplexy if there was any argument. So she just let on she was Mrs. Parker and allowed she had a room for him if he'd just sit on the porch while she readied it up. "My sakes," she said to Maud Peabody as they made up the old man's bed, "if this had of been my own private home, I'd of been obliged to take him in just the same, he's that fussed."

Meantime the old man sat on the porch with his breath scraping in and out like a saw. His eyelids would droop almost closed and then fly open again. He kept mumbling over names of places in town he remembered and trying to look around to find them, but finally he nodded and dozed. Suddenly there were voices behind him and a screen door slammed.

"Dad blast it!" he yelled, starting awake. "Where'd they put the Congregational Church?"

"Well," said Miss Lord, "I must say it's right on the corner where it always was."

The old man rubbed his hand over his eyes and looked at his landlady from under his bushy eyebrows, "Well, Missis Parker," he drawled, "you got mighty skinny since last I seen you."

"Well," said Miss Lord. "I must say I ain't Missis Parker, and I must say I don't know who you are neither, comes to that."

"Who the hell are you then?" said the old man.

"Miss Nellie Lord."

"Never heard of you," he said wearily. "Where's my room?"

No one knew where the old man had come from; maybe he didn't even know himself. When he first came back it looked as if he'd come home to die, but as he lived on quietly he seemed to get his strength back. At first he left his room only for meals; then one day he tottered down the walk as far as the old church; next day he climbed up the church steps and went inside.

Leaning on his stick, panting from the climb, he cocked his head to one side and peered around. The sun came in the windows so bright it made him squint. He hobbled over to a pew and sat down in the sunlight. A late fly was buzzing. He nodded. He fell asleep.

He took to going to the church every day but Sunday. People who saw him go in were incredulous. "That old curmudgeon pray? More likely he figures if he goes in the church to cuss his enemies it'll stick better." And he wasn't praying. He sat where the sun fell through the window panes; he mumbled; argued with people who'd died long ago; laughed at jokes so old that if he'd told them outside they'd have been taken for new.

People didn't know or care much about the old fellow. They knew he was a wanderer. Quarrelled with his mother and left home when he was a boy, some had heard. Came home again, got married, and ran off again. Nobody remembered him ever being any good. He wasn't much good now. Some old people remembered how he always used to be talking about living his own life while he was running away from his womenfolks. Well, let him!

But it's one thing to talk of living your own life in the days of your youth and vigor, and another when you're so old your hand won't carry food to your mouth without spilling half of it down your vest. Maybe an old man can do without friends, but he's so much like a baby that he needs a mother. It looked as if a need like that made old man Henessy take to going to church. The church wasn't like the out-of-state cars that whizzed down the highways like to blow you to dust; she wasn't like the salesmen who put up for the night at Miss Nellie Lord's and wouldn't so much as listen to whether you were Republican or Democrat. The church was nailed down solid to her foundations; she stood right still and patient while the old man climbed her steps, walked down her aisle, sat in her pews. The old man wasn't likely to be thinking about running away now. Likely he was grateful for things not running away from him.

Through the long winter old man Henessy was like a cat recovering from a fight. Warming himself in the sun in front of the parlor gas fire, he began to lick his wounds shut and to strike up human contacts. First he visited the church—regularly, every day but Sunday. Nobody bothered him to explain his out-of-the-way churchgoing; he seemed too old to be saved from anything or for anything, so it was quite of his own accord that he began attending Sunday services, too. On Sundays he came early, sat in the front pew, and never took his eye off the minister. He harrumphed at what he disagreed with, nodded at what appeared to him just, and led the singing by half a bar at the top of his voice.

The old man may have come home to die, but by spring thaw he looked to be getting a new hold on living. He got crankier every day; he brought Miss Nellie Lord to crying on Maud Peabody's shoulder one day when his egg was cooked too long. After breakfast, he would set off from Miss Lord's front porch, biting a chew off his plug as he went down the walk. From across the street where he was sweeping the grocery store porch, Joe Horn would yell, "Mornin', Pop. Off for your mornin' worship?" "T'hell with you," Henessy would snap back. "I'm a-goin' down t' the river t'see how the ice is breakin' up." But when he got down to the corner

he'd be out of breath, he'd clutch at his side, and, leaning on the railing, he'd creep up the church steps to fall into a pew. One morning Joe Horn, who followed him out of curiosity, heard his voice sing out loud inside the hollow church: "God dammit, t'ain't like me!"

When the true warm weather came, old man Henessy broke with the church. He even had some real reason, though if there hadn't been one, he would have made it up. Some of the ladies of the church began agitating about the sun fading the red plush pew cushions; they proposed the Ladies' Aid take some of its rummage sale money to buy window blinds, which could be kept drawn during the week. "What'll old man Henessy do without the light to worship by?" somebody said, by way of a joke. Well, it developed that some thought old man Henessy had no right dirtying up the church weekdays. That old varmint wasn't praying or repenting his sins; just wanted a sunny place to nap, and took advantage of Mr. Barns' leaving the church unlocked. By the time the ladies had talked themselves into a good fret, somebody let out that the janitor had found a cigar butt under a pew one day. Treating the house of God like a low-down saloon; like as not drinking in there, and carrying on! They voted unanimously to buy the blinds and keep the church locked during the week except for choir practice and business meetings.

The first day the church was locked the old man went up the steps as usual and turned the knob. For a moment he stared at it unbelievingly; then taking his cane and shaking it like a policeman's billy, he tramped down the steps and across the yard to the minister's house. He pressed the door frame in several places before he could make his shaking fingertip meet the bell button. The minister's wife opened the door.

"Howdo, Mr. Henessy," she said. "Won't you . . ." But he was already inside.

"Minister in?" The old man's eyes looked about to burst, they were so bulging and bloodshot.

"Well . . . that is . . . not right . . ."

"I'll wait," and the old man dropped to the hall bench. The minister's wife went hopelessly to call her husband.

By the time the minister came downstairs Henessy was breathless, and tears stood in his eyes. "Howdo, Mr. Henessy," the minister said timidly.

The old man looked up from under his eyebrows and turned purple. The minister watched him, dumbfounded. "Church is locked," Henessy got out at last.

"Well," the minister said, "if you want to get in, Mr. Henessy, I've got the key right in my pocket. You come right along." He put his hand under the old man's elbow, thinking about the scandal there'd be if old man Henessy died in a fury right there in his front hall.

"Don't touch me!" the old man roared. The minister snatched back his hand. They crossed the yard to the church in a great hurry, but very

slowly. The minister ran up the steps and opened the door. Inside the church it looked pale and dim because of the new white window blinds. The old man shook his head like a bull and charged at the first blind cord. He jerked it so hard the blind flapped round and round its spring roller. Then he fell into a seat in the free square of sun. The minister tiptoed out and shut the door.

At first the old man sprawled back in the pew, exhausted. Then he sat up and shook the back of the pew in front, grinding his few snags of teeth together. But he let go, and shook his head soon. "T'ain't like me," he said aloud. "Puny. Goin' on second childhood." Then he broke down and cried.

He quieted down after that and went back to his room. There he fell asleep and slept through supper time. He woke hungry, and mad again—clapped on his hat and went out into the evening looking for somebody to take it out on. The first lights he came to were in the church, where there was a meeting going on. He charged up the steps and burst through the door. Everybody turned in the pews to stare. Old Henessy tramped down the aisle, fanning aside Mr. Barns, the minister, who rose to meet him. At the head of the aisle he turned and glared at the people in the pews. He held them all fixed and silent until the church seemed to echo with stillness. Then he barked: "Fixin' to lock more worshipers outa the house of God?"

They were still. Then the minister began feebly, "I think, Mr. Henessy, there has been a misunderstanding . . ." But he was interrupted by the president of the Ladies' Aid Society.

"May I ask, Mr. Henessy, what makes you think you own this church?"

The old man shook his head and leered. "May I ask, Missis Horseface Brown, what makes you think anybody owns this church? It's God's church, ain't it?"

A big farmer got up. "It's God's church, all right, but God don't pay no bills. The board runs the church and the board voted to keep it locked. It's gonna stay locked."

Henessy hopped with rage. "Who's the church for? What's the church for? What's the use havin' a church if you lock out them as wants to worship in it?"

Mrs. Brown, still on her feet, pointed her finger at him. "Them as wants to throw *cigar butts* under the pews."

The old man went into a frenzy. He trembled, shook his fists; spittle whitened the corners of his mouth. "Cigar butts! It's a racketeerin' frameup! Godless lot! I'll put a curse on the goddam place! May this Congregational Church of Harrodsbury fall down like a ton of bricks if I ever pass through its doors again!"

But by this time it was plain the old fellow would drop dead if somebody didn't get him home to bed. All anger went out of the crowd, and the big farmer came around the end of the pew, took Henessy under the

armpit, and marched him away. He was crying like a baby; the people in church could hear his sobs dying away as he went down the street.

Next morning he was out bright and early, and cockily took up a new place on the grocery store porch, where he preached a regular sermon to the usual collection of loafers and little boys; a sermon on the hypocrisy of Harrodsbury folks in general and the board of the Congregational Church in particular; how they preached God for everybody, and practiced Him for taxpayers only, but how he'd fooled 'em, old Henessy had; had a whole winter of settin' in their church free without havin' no collection taken up — that hurt 'em, the old skinflints. He was goin' to pick up and leave this one horse town one of these days; was just waitin' for a letter . . . Pretty soon even the little boys would turn their backs and start a marble game when they saw him coming. He tramped up and down the streets looking for an audience, mumbling, "Soon's I hear from Jake Truslo I'll be jumpin' the first train west, I will." Every time he passed the Congregational Church he'd shake his fist at it.

He'd had his suitcase packed for a week. At last one night in June when the crickets were singing and the moon came up behind the church steeple, the old man got ready to go. It was a hot night even for June; at midnight he was sweating as he dragged his suitcase down the carpeted stairs. On the front porch he dropped into a rocker, panting. Insects chirrupped; the river whispered. The moon, small, now, and high, painted the town clean black and white; hard, yet peaceful. A cat yowled. The old man began to rock and fan himself with his hat. He rocked and fanned for some time in silence. "Life'd be right tolerable," he whispered, "if there wasn't never nobody around." He rocked some more. Then he said out loud, "You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone." He rocked slower. He fell asleep in the porch rocker.

Miss Nellie Lord found him there next morning, still asleep, but breathing like a death rattle and shivering in the full June sun. She called across the street to Joe Horn, and together they carried the old man to his room. Miss Nellie called Dr. Willetts right away. She didn't know if the old man'd last till he got there.

The doctor couldn't set any length to his life, but he comforted Miss Nellie that it couldn't last much over a week at the outside. He had a lot of things wrong with him but most of them was just plain years.

The old man was delirious; little boys would collect under his window to hear him cuss. He lay in Miss Nellie Lord's white iron bed mumbling and mumbling all day and all night; sometimes so you could hear him, and sometimes too low. Some days he'd seem in a rage again: "They want me to die, that's what!" he'd say as loud as he could, and then he'd goddam every name that came into his head. Then the next day he would talk as if he had a terrible sin on his conscience, but he couldn't think what it was. "I stole money from Maw's egg cup!" he'd say, as if at last he'd thought of it. But then he'd figure no, that was too long ago. Then he'd start off

again, "Maybe the time I shot the Mexican fellow down in Vera Cruz!" But then he'd remember that fellow had lived. It seemed he had to go back and live his whole life over—eighty-five years of it—before he could get to dying. Then, other days, when the hard summer heat set in, it seemed he had already died, and was in hell. "Oh," he'd say to Miss Nellie, "just take me off the fire a minute, Mother," so pitiful that she brought her only electric fan in and left it in his room. Often he'd mumble, "Can't go home! Something terrible'll happen if I go home," as if he meant he mustn't die, as if he had to travel on and on through the hot days and thunderstorming nights, his strength just about exhausted by the trouble of holding on to life, and looking for nothing more than his reason for living.

He lived till September and the cool weather. Then one morning he woke up and looked at his hands, lying like two old tree roots outside the sheet. He tried to lift them, but he couldn't. At that moment Miss Lord came into the room. "You know," he whispered to her, "I just want to go to church so bad, and I can't."

"Now there," said Miss Lord. "Time enough to think about going to church after you've had your face washed."

But the old man didn't seem to hear her. "Because she'll fall down the minute I pass through her gates. Because my mother put a curse on her. Because she's my mother."

After this he was quiet and let his landlady wash him. When she went downstairs Miss Lord went into the kitchen and threw up her hands to Maud Peabody, who was getting breakfast.

"Off again?" said Maud.

"Crazy's a loon," said Miss Lord, "and gettin' me right crazy too, Maud. I don't mind tellin' you, I'd be just plain scared if I was alone in the house with him ravin' that way."

But the old man was not raving any more. From that day he was quiet, refused food, and spent his time dying. It took him quite a while, because he had such a hard hold on life. He just lay still, though, and let his grasp slowly fall away.

The middle of September he died. Miss Lord wept from relief. She found just enough money for his funeral tied up in a red pocket handkerchief.

The morning of his funeral the rain was coming down in bucketfuls, but Miss Nellie Lord was so glad to be rid of the old man she didn't even mind having to go out in the weather. She busied herself sorting over his clothes and found an old gold watch, which she quickly hid from Maud Peabody. She deserved to make a little something after all the trouble he'd put her to.

The Girl Scouts, the minister's wife, Miss Lord, and Maud Peabody turned out for the funeral. The Girl Scouts always went to funerals, but today they weren't in full force, because it was raining so hard a lot of their mothers kept them home. Main Street was running ankle deep in

water. Maud Peabody let Miss Lord see she was doing her a great favor to accompany her. The minister had a cold and his wife sat staring at the coffin worrying about him going to the cemetery in this pouring rain.

"Whed the Lord bless a bad with so bady years beyod his three score ad ten," said the Reverend Mr. Barns, "we bust pause . . ."

The rain drummed on the roof; behind the church the river roared. Nobody could quite hear the minister. Everybody looked patient, though, maybe glad to be in out of the storm. Two Girl Scouts played tic-tac-toe on the inside cover of a hymn book. Mr. Barns talked as long as he could without breathing, blew his nose, talked on. He was trying to make it short.

There was no need to try. The door of the church flew open on a gust of wind and Joe Horn slammed it after him. "You'll have to get right out," he said excitedly. "The dam's broke. Radio says to leave the district quick's ever you can. Goin' to be a hurr'cane."

Mr. Barns was sneezing and couldn't answer for a minute. Then, with the tears streaming down his face, he said, "But whad'll we do? How'll we bury hib?"

"Leave him, leave him!" said Joe. "He's dead." Then, "He's in the Lord's house, the Lord'll provide."

With the dam gone there was no time to lose. Miss Lord and Maud Peabody were already at the door beside Joe; Mr. and Mrs. Barns and the Girl Scouts crowded after them, down the aisle and out the door. Mr. Barns stopped to lock the door after them while his wife held an umbrella over him.

Old Man Henessy's coffin lay on a draped wooden trestle, alone now in the white empty church. Black against the white woodwork, it looked like a person standing there, the way a piece of furniture sometimes looks like a person. It stood dignified and patient in its long skirts. Outside, the wind and rain battered, the people deserted the town for higher ground, and at last old man Henessy was the only human thing left to meet the lines of water that rose rapidly up the river banks.

The coffin still stood patiently when the edges of its black drapery were floating in water. Finally it floated free and bumped gently among the floating red pew cushions and heavy bobbing pews. Outside, the wind whipped the water white as it rose steadily around the houses and trees. The water inside the church was only gently awash, with the pieces of church furniture swimming on the surface, while the coffin swung slowly back and forth in an eddy, like a log floating down a slow river.

When the water had risen over the windows a real disturbance began in the church. There was a kind of wrenching and lurching; the foundation and framework parted, and the whole church floated away. Swaying back and forth, toppling without a keel to steady it, it made a complete circle before it took up with the current and rushed off on the flood. Windows broke, a chicken took refuge on the roof, one by one the pew cushions got

water logged and sank, and the pews were carried out the broken windows. Only one thing stood fast with the church: old man Henessy's coffin was jammed firmly between the ceiling and a brass chandelier. Like a Flying Dutchman the church sailed her crazy course, catching on treetops that nearly upset her, losing two walls as she crashed over an iron railway pass, until at last she came to rest on the shore of a high, dry hill.

When it was all over and the water went down again, the people of Harrodsbury came back to count up the damages. They found their houses coated with mud to the second story, trees wrenched up, the bridge washed out. Some buildings—outhouses, Joe Horn's barn, the Congregational Church—were entirely washed away. Of the barn only old planks were found, but the whole roof and part of the steeple of the church were lodged on a hill on the Fred Parker place. Inside, they found old man Henessy in his coffin, coated in a big clot of mud. They dug him out and buried him right away, figuring he'd had half a funeral, which was enough for an old heathen like him. Anyway, they had work to do.

W. M. FROHOCK:

Céline's Quest for Love

Of the weird legends which have surrounded Céline ever since *Voyage au bout de la nuit* was englished as *Journey to the End of Night,* we may at least believe that he is Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, an obscure physician who, until the war, operated a clinic in Paris, avoided society and publicity, and relieved the strain of an apparently double personality by writing his violent books. American interest in him declined rapidly after the translation of *Mort à crédit* as *Death on the Installment Plan;* the English versions of his autobiographical *Mea Culpa* and of *The Life of Semmelweis* have attracted little attention, and if *Bagatelles pour un massacre* and *École des cadavres,* his latest efforts, have been translated, I am unaware of it. In France, however, controversy about him has tended to upset traditional values to an extent which itself testifies that in this country we have not grasped his full significance. The *Nouvelle Revue Française,* generally a defender of the writer's privilege to say what he pleases, has dismissed his work as ordure; the *Action Française,* which habitually makes a great pother about public morality, calls Céline a modern Rabelais and applauds his "great, healthy laughter." Certainly someone must be wrong. It is high time to try to make sense of Céline.

Very possibly the most solid reassurance that Céline is not elaborating a colossal joke is provided by our persistent doubts regarding his sanity. Since Dante we have known that the poet is entitled to view corruption and filth, and to measure all possibilities of cruelty. Yet at the same time we reserve clinical names for those who come away obsessed with what they have seen—and Céline is certainly so obsessed. Ferdinand, the autobiographical character in *Death on the Installment Plan,* is both physically and mentally *le merdeux,* haunted by his inability to keep himself clean. He also furnishes, in the phantasmagoric chase near the opening of the book, an example of sex-linked hysteria which could entrance Krafft-Ebing. Gratuitous cruelty riots through all Céline's novels and rises to a hideous apogee in *Bagatelles.* And the language structure of his first-person narratives, the complete shamelessness and the unimpeded flow of words, suggest forcibly that the character telling the story is after psychic relief from the experience.

Nothing forbids our thinking, in fact, that Céline's books are a response to a pathological need to attain the Ultima Thule of sincerity, to be more sincere than it is possible for a man to be, or for a normal man to want to be. This is at least a plausible explanation of his style. And, since sincerity and ethics go together, to discuss Céline's ethics we are forced to discuss his style.

Céline's stylistic predicament is like that of Thomas Wolfe. Wolfe wrote 000 million words trying to say what he felt about his environment, about the plight of the individual lost in America. By the individual he meant Thomas Wolfe. Like Céline's, Wolfe's style is a search for something. Maxwell Perkins is a great editor because he persuaded Wolfe to cut off the river of words somewhere, anywhere. "You will never be the Flaubert sort of writer," he told Wolfe. He was right. Flaubert wanted to get the one, definitive, completely right word. Not Wolfe—his job was to say what he could, right or wrong, so long as somehow he got it said. When one word failed he tried two, and when these failed he tried a dozen. The process of selection—which is classicism—was inoperative because it was not worthwhile. Try as he did, Wolfe never got it all said, and if he had had time to go on, if he had not been cut down so early, there is still a good chance that he would never have had time to say it. In his great haste Céline is like Wolfe, despite obvious dissimilarities.

The great difference is that Céline has freed his style of literary words, in an attempt to dig down through literature into the rhythms and syntax and vocabulary of common talk. His chief character speaks in the first person in words that do not come as though they had been written. The sentences are full of *retours—"Je ne sais pas moi ce qu'il t'a dit à toi, le type." Moi* is in apposition to *je; à toi* repeats the indirect object to heighten the difference between the first and second persons, to insist that *il* may have told one a different story than he told the other; *le type* is in apposition to *il,* closing the sentence with a reference to what brought the matter up in the first place. This is the way common Frenchmen talk, in analytical phrases; it is the way Céline writes, and it plays hell when you try to translate him into English. Moreover, his vocabulary is vulgar, vile. Denoël et Steele, his notably unsqueamish publishing firm, feels no pressing obligation to keep the public ear clean, yet Denoël et Steele has to leave blanks in *Mort à credit* in place of words unpublishable even in French. Now to use words in this way shows a very great disdain for words—which, on the other hand, helps the translator. The word, the way of saying, does not count beside the thing that is said, or rather, what the author wants to say. When Wolfe was ready to write a novel, he felt as though a swelling black cloud inside him were ready to burst. Quite conceivably Céline feels the same way. The difference is that Wolfe's energy went into finding literary words to express his feelings, however imperfectly, while Céline gets entirely away from the vocabulary of literature. He concedes the great struggle for words, the battle to remain articulate.

We were wrong, when Céline told an interviewer that *Voyage au bout de la nuit* was about the quest for love, to take him at first for a cheap joker. Quest for love? We had respected him, for he had the dignity any man can have who writes six hundred pages on the hatefulness of life; we admired a man who could keep that long a consistent view of

life. Almost anyone can hate it for a little and then love it for a little. Few love it and accept it as Wolfe did; few, like Céline, hate it and reject it. If he called *Voyage au bout de la nuit* a quest for love, then he was either playing at mystification or trying a hand at owlish, not very funny irony. But as you look it over a second time the night of which he talks has no definitive end, to be sure; yet every little while the least flicker of light breaks through. There is the man down in Africa, for instance, growing a few rachitic flowers while he waits for his little girl to come to him; and there is the decent whore in Detroit who is kind to Bardamu. Decency and love—or charity and self-repression—then *do* exist, at least momentarily. But after each glimmer of hope follows a dose of frustration, for which masturbation is his symbol. The mother in the hospital can do nothing else after her child has died, and the doctors cannot stop her; death has frustrated her love. And the man who runs the marriage bureau arranges love for other people while he *se touche sous la table.* In *Mort à credit* masturbation can be depended upon to put the idiot child to sleep, and is Ferdinand's immediate response not only to the presence of a beautiful woman in the alley where he lives, but to almost any beauty anywhere. In this book, more violent and fuller of misanthropic hatred than *Voyage au bout de la nuit,* masturbation returns like a leit-motif, as a symbol of frustration. Attention to his style—or rather his anti-style—would have made us see this, and kept us from taking his work for anything but the expression of a progressively blacker despondency.

Mort à credit is more desolate than *Voyage au bout de la nuit.* Bardamu *is* out in search of something, whereas Ferdinand wants no more than this: that life let him alone. He is a doctor, and should know what is the matter with him. He is sick, victim of some nightmarish madness. He detests medicine, *"cette merde."* He is a miserable adult telling the story of a miserable child, fumbling with life. Everything young Ferdinand touches—his parents' business, the preparatory school in England, all the schemes of the wild inventor Courtial—crumbles as soon as he approaches it. Most of the people around him are mad. His father has obsessions; Courtial's only contact with reality is established when he commits suicide. Life looks even darker, even less meaningful, at the end of *Mort à credit* than at the end of *Voyage,* and *Mort à credit* has even less style, is told with even greater garrulous haste than the earlier book. We conclude that in the years that separate the books (1934-1937) how he says it has become less important to Céline, and getting it said of even greater moment. Yet what he says is clear from reading not *Mort à credit* alone but the whole series of his books, just as the meaning of his style emerges less from the study of any single performance than from a view of his progress toward the anti-style, the negation of literature.

Céline's first book was his thesis for the School of Medicine, *The Life of Semmelweis.* Semmelweis was the Viennese physician who discovered that by ordinary antiseptic precautions puerperal fever, which then took a

horrifying toll of women, could be reduced almost to text-book rarity. Semmelweis cared more about his discovery than he did about success in medical practice. "He was one of those rare persons who are able to love life in its simplest and most beautiful aspect: to be alive." And for his effort to save human life Semmelweis was driven from Vienna by the other doctors; nowhere in Europe would the established men tolerate him. Finally he committed suicide. "He shows us," writes Céline in the preface, "the great danger of wanting to do too much good to men." Nobility, the possibility of a noble life, of self-abnegation, are at the time of this book admissible to Céline's view of life. *The Life of Semmelweis* dates from 1934.

With passing time Céline leaned more and more toward the thesis of misanthropy. Yet for years he still had hope, if not in Europe as a whole, at least in Russia. As with Gide, a visit to Russia dispelled the hope. Céline already hated the bourgeoisie for its narcissism, blindness, vacuity, impotence. He now discovered that the Soviet Revolution was no better; that whereas the old religion had at least told men the truth about their own unworthiness and their lack of merit, the materialism of the new belief was sordid and the truth was not in it. "The great pretension to happiness, that is the great imposture! . . . There is no happiness in existence, but only unhappiness, more or less great, more or less belated, vivid, secret, devious, sly . . . All the wars of history have been fought to the music of optimism."

To publish this report on Russia in the same covers with *The Life of Semmelweis* was to invite attention to the gulf that separates the attitudes of the two books. Semmelweis is a hero, not greatly different from the Romantic genius who is universally misunderstood by the herd. In the story of Céline's disappointment in Russia there are no heroes, but only the herd; Russia negates the very concept of the hero. Céline calls his account of the trip *Mea Culpa.* Apparently his sin was Hope. His trip, as far as I can tell, took place in 1936 or 1937.

A similar gulf seems to separate *Mort à credit* from the earlier *Voyage au bout de la nuit.* If the latter is a quest for love, the other is a dusty answer. The penalty for life is death, and the penalty for braving death is agony: for instance, Metitpois, the great doctor, taught Ferdinand that the most exquisitely painful deaths are those that involve the most sensitive tissues. He dies of coronary embolism himself. "With his memories of the classics, his resolutions, and the example of Caesar he held out for a hundred and twenty seconds, then he squealed like a skunk for eighteen minutes." Death, not love, is the dependable rule. Grandmother Caroline, who is good to Ferdinand, dies of pneumonia; Nora, the kindly wife of the English school head, drowns herself; Courtial ends his life with a shotgun. Worse, life is a process of death. We die on the installment plan—hence the title of the novel and the pattern of sickness and madness which runs through it. Céline is a doctor, for whom humanity is essentially sick.

Is there any point in working over the patient?

There is little to choose in the ways that a thoroughly malevolent beast may be governed. The course of Céline's thinking, from *Semmelweis* through the *Voyage* and on through *Mort à credit* to *Mea Culpa,* leads him to the conclusion that man in his illness is essentially malevolent, and that life in the company of that malevolent animal is no more significant than a nightmare. For madness the proper costume is the strait-jacket. Is not the form of government for human beings which most effectively resembles the strait-jacket, which most effectively prevents their running physically and intellectually and morally at large, the Fascist form? Must we not then admit that, to Céline's logic, *Bagatelles pour un massacre* is the only possible conclusion?

Thus the logic of Céline's ethical thought runs parallel to the logic of the development of his style. His style concludes in the entire negation of the idea of style, the antithesis of imparting order and movement to ideas. This is literary nihilism. His ethics conclude in the necessity of a political strait-jacket; not a fascism which aims with whatever blind optimism at the amelioration of our kind, but a fascism of desperation, the Revolution of Nihilism.

Céline has carried the discovery of the nineteenth-century naturalists to its ultimate absurdity. "The mind is mad," wrote Taine, "as the body is sick—by its nature." Although Céline has written a short piece called *Homage to Zola,* and as far as I know has not written in praise of Taine, it is Taine's thesis rather than Zola's which Céline develops to its nihilistic conclusion. Zola believed that the people could eventually learn to govern themselves, with the aid of science. That is what relieves the despair at the end of *Germinal,* after the strike at the mine has failed through the stupidity of the workers. To Zola, progress is possible. Taine also had believed in the possibility of progress . . . until the Commune showed him in 1871 that progress had not reached the point where bourgeois investments were safe from the populace. After that the people looks more and more to him like Alexander Hamilton's Great Beast. He therefore becomes a strong-government man, and if he does not go so far as Céline in his objection to representative government it is because he is not so violently and continuously convinced that humanity is thoroughly depraved. Céline, on the other hand, argues that at best humanity achieves Humanity only as a chicken flies—when it is disturbed. Zola thought he was Taine's disciple when hewrote, "Vice and virtue are products like sulphuric acid and sugar," as an epigraph to *Thérèse Raquin.* Céline is Taine's real disciple.

Céline's ultimate conclusion in respect to the quest for love is that humanity can't reach up that high. This is the ultimate ethical error of all naturalism. Céline, in reaching this conclusion, has made the mistake of rejecting the share of truth he could have kept from Pascal's notion of the two infinities of man, the infinitely great as well as the infinitely

small. He could have rejected Pascal's Christianity and still have recognized that what makes Bardamu significant (to us if not to Bardamu) is his ability to *search* for love, a symptom of his infinite greatness. From it he derives, in Aristotle's sense, his tragic stature. Ferdinand in *Mort à credit* has no such stature; he remains only *le merdeux*.

This may not be Céline's fault. The whole nineteenth century expected too much of love: one definition of the Romantic, the Augustinian definition, calls him a man consecrated to keeping alive the love for love—not the love of *something*. Love for its own sake is hard to find, and if you have ever believed in its existence the experience of not finding it may be a sort of traumatic shock. May such a traumatic shock explain the inchoate garrulity of Céline's style, his inadequacy when compared with what we infer he is trying to say? If Babbitt and More were alive, they would undoubtedly place Céline far out on the ultimate Kamchatka of Romanticism. Possibly the idea is a good one. It serves at least to show him as one of the latest, most extreme developments of the movement which has preoccupied the French novel for the last century and a half—the tragic failure of the individual ego to adjust itself to its environment.

Céline's fruitless quest for love may well be the final stage of this remarkably persistent journey of the human spirit toward emotional bankruptcy and ethical insignificance. If so, he merits being taken, not as an owlish joke, but with considerable seriousness.

KAY BOYLE:

Wanderer

To Pegeen Vail

He had come to this part of the French Alps in August, or perhaps the end of July it was, and rented a ground-floor room with a balcony to it in the house just down the road: a man of thirty or thereabouts with dark hair and white teeth and an opera singer's loud agnostic laugh. He was not a very tall man, but his shoulders were broad and his waist thin, and he had scars in his cheeks when he smiled and even when he didn't, as if in the country he came from that was the way a man vindicated his own or a woman's honor. It was easy enough to think of him in fencer's tights and a neat-wristed blouse dancing nimbly this way and that on the balls of his feet, the rapier poised for thrust or defense, and the eyes ready, black, and quick as a Spaniard's might have been but not like an Italian's or an Oriental's indolent eyes.

It was Judith (fourteen years and a few months more that summer) who first saw him coming up the road or down it, sometimes dressed in linen slacks with a racquet under his arm on his way to the hotel for tennis, and sometimes dressed in corduroys with a knapsack on his shoulders, prepared for climbing higher. And whenever he passed the Americans' châlet he lifted his eyes and looked at it; he glanced up at the sloping alpine roof, and the balconies, and briefly but tensely at the windows—perhaps as impersonally as if he were looking merely at Mont-Blanc beyond them, but looking just the same. Standing a little to one side of the glass so that the daylight could not pick her out, Judith could see the way the hair grew back from the point on his brow, and the sunburned flesh, and the nostril's flare; could come to the window day after day and wait unseen for the black sardonic eye and the dark lip's curve and the shoulders' breadth descending, or see the narrow hips and the bowed black head climbing the other way. Once or twice mother, passing through the room, paused to look out without wonder on the bronzed hands and throat and the clefted chin, and the firm easy gait of a man who knows exactly where he's going, and how high the mountain is, and how deep the river, and how long it will take him, whatever obstacles race and nationality and man's intolerance might put before him, to reach the place to which he is destined to go.

"He looks a bit like a waiter," mother said, smoking her cigarette behind the pane. "I can just see him coming into a restaurant with a tray balanced on one hand, and perhaps even spilling a little of the soup. . ."

"A waiter!" breathed Judith, standing just out of sight with her hair as light as taffy, and her face small, and her legs long as a foal's.

"Oh, mother, not a waiter—!" While her heart said in silence: Oh, spare me, spare me, if he lifts his eyes again and looks this way!

Nobody knew his name or where he had come from, but Judith had endowed him with a history as grim as Heathcliff's own. She would shut the door of her room at night and do her teeth and comb her fair hair out, and then she would sit a long time copying the words about him into the leather-backed book, her head hanging delicate as a flower into the lamp's pure cone of light.

"He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect," she wrote, taking it carefully from page three, paragraph two, and leaving out the words that did not apply. "In dress and manners a gentleman . . . I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of human kindliness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again."

For twice she had heard the wild cinematic wind howl down the moors, and watched the simulated rains drench in sad poetic fury over Hollywood's Thrushcross Grange and the Blackhorse marsh to Wuthering Heights, weeping silently and savagely there in the French movie theatre's velvet covered fauteuil for Cathy's love and Heathcliff's inarticulate pain. For the ninth time she had reached page sixty-seven, paragraph six, and read in solemn anguish:

"I've dreamed in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after . . . they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the color of my mind,"—while the dark man, the sleeves of his soft blue jersey knotted and clinging around his neck as the arms of a woman might, walked down the road to where his rented room was and closed the door upon his loneliness, and hope expired from the day.

Because it was August, the talk of Poland and what might be coming had already begun, but no one had thought to wonder about him yet or sought to endow him with a nationality. All that month he was simply the foreigner, free as any foreigner to come and rent a room for a few weeks in the mountains, and free to look as he looked at women, and free to lift his eyes to any window when he went past on the road. The day of the cattle fair fell on the twenty-seventh or eighth, and the sun still shone, and that was the third time Judith saw him close enough to touch him if she had stretched out her hand. He was leaning on the top-bar of the fence they had set up for the occasion around the place where people skated in the wintertime, leaning there to watch the calves that had broken loose from their pens frolicking like young lambs in the dust of the square. He was wearing a blue shirt and his head was bare, and as he watched the calves playing the game of tag like children together, he threw his head back and laughed the mirthless, operatic laugh. Only when he saw Judith crossing from the shooting gallery did his mouth close suddenly, as if upon words he could not trust himself to say.

(The first time she had ever come close to him was in the evening,

coming home from a music lesson in the mountain dusk; and in spite of the heart's trepidation she had dared to see the scars on his face, those engraved emblems of a man's repeated courage flaying, as if in cool white fury, the cheeks' dark sunburned flesh, and dared to meet the eyes' mysterious salutation. And the second time passed close to him when he stood beneath the cobbler's window where the statue of the Virgin Mary and the canary's cage were set out in the sun; saw him, in spite of the blinding, bewildering hand of timidity across her vision, standing with his head lifted and his throat bare in the shirt's open neck and the lips shaped to whistle the bird's notes clearly and truly up the house's wall to where it hung confined, the sound sweet and wondrous enough for man or child or bird to pause and listen.) But now when they passed each other near the merry-go-round on the cattle-packed square or halted by the tethered goats an instant, there was never a word to say to him, not even "bon jour" to give and take, only his eyes moving, dark and ardent, past mother's face to Judith's face.

Then on the second of September, this happened: the jointed pipe which drew the rain and in winter the melted snow down from the châlet's roof to the ground had come apart and Judith, grey slacks shielding the foal's young legs, was trying to shinny up it. She was trying to reach the break with one hand and fit it piece to piece again, holding hard with her knees and stretching high, when the voice spoke out behind her from the ground. It spoke in French, but with an accent to it, speaking bitterly but gently to her, and the silver bracelets clattered in terror down her arm.

"I could help you then, perhaps," it said. "I am taller, you see, so perhaps I could be the one to reach up there better."

The heart might then have ceased to function, the blood abruptly halted in its scheduled movement from vein to vein, the eyes at that instant been stricken blind, and the breath strangled in the throat—for, with the anguished music of the drowning playing in her ears, she slid down the pipe's funnel to the ground and stood there, not breathing yet and seeing nothing for a long time but the reeling wheels of sunlight while she rubbed the insides of her hands in slow senseless motion with her handkerchief's wadded ball. Before she could find the look or word to give him (if sound could possibly have been given tongue or eye the fearful power of sight), he had, in a single bound, achieved the summit of the garage door whose swinging panels folded inward and outward, outward and inward on their hinges like a paper screen. There he balanced without effort, sitting perilously on the narrow edge, his feet in the tennis-shoes and the cuffs of the white knitted socks rolled at the ankles just even now with her eyes.

"I'm afraid the oil—that is to say, I think the oil we paint the wood with," she began saying, the French words stammered fast. "I mean, I'm afraid it comes off—it may come off on your clothes, that is—from the door, I mean—" And the dark man sitting perched on the fluctuating

edge spoke down the distance to her, saying:

"You are kind to think of me, Mademoiselle, you are very kind to think of me. I have been a long time without anybody thinking about me that way," and he reached out for the two covered pieces of pipe along the châlet's wall.

While he worked, the garage door folded in and out, mercilessly in and out, with only the body's poise and weight saying in silence, quiet, quiet, and gently now, gently now, to it as the voice might cajole a fractious mount. She saw the pure white teeth bite down into the lip, and the soles of the canvas shoes press flat against the panels of the door, and the veins stand dark in his temples for a moment—the grudgingly given betrayals of the flesh's strain. In another minute he had fitted the pipe's joint into joint, and when it was done he leapt down to the ground and brushed his hands off, and the garage door clattered back upon itself in freedom and left them looking into each other's faces. And now the mouth that had shaped the notes of music for the bird and the Virgin, and the accompaniment of laughter for the calves gambolling on the square, said almost in shyness to her:

"It is this language I cannot speak very well. It is not my language and I have not been here such a long time to learn it," saying the French words in a way no Frenchman would have liked to hear them said. "Here I have not friends as I have in my own country," he said, "and I think without friends it is difficult to learn the words in any country, it is difficult even to live without a feeling that you are among them—I am trying to say this, that you are among friends even if the right words are not always found at once to be said to each other—"

"Yes," Judith whispered, looking in desperation at the little space of ground that lay between them. "Yes, I know."

"But you have learned to speak it," he said. "You are not French, of course, I saw for a long time that you are not French, and still you have learned to speak. You are English, are you? I have said every day, and I was very glad to say so, that you are an English girl." Before she could say no to it, say No, we're Americans, mother and father and I Americans, he went on saying: "I have an English pound. I have one English pound sterling now in my room. When I was getting through Switzerland a friend gave it to me to help me when I needed it." She could feel the power of his eyes on her, moving over her hair and face in nameless emotion, and she could not bear to lift her own eyes and see the teeth white as a wolf's in the sunburned face, and the marks of valor scarring the cheeks, and the eyes hot and violent under the tilted black wings of the brows. "Perhaps your father would like the pound," he was saying. "The banks here will not change foreign money any longer. A little town is like that when they feel disaster is on the way. One day you could ask your father if he would like the pound," he said.

"Yes," said Judith, not daring to see his face still, and she clung for

courage to the wadded handkerchief in her palms.

"And now perhaps the war coming, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the next day," he went on, harshly and nervously. "The war coming along to prove this to everyone again—to prove to you and me and everyone that all languages are useless, all speech useless to everyone. All the small countries to be lost over again, and nations and races sent wandering although they haven't much wanderlust left in their blood any more. 'Thou shalt wander on the earth till I return,'" he said bitterly, "and so we wander—people without houses, without a homeland, without food even—"

Without looking up into his face, she knew suddenly that what he needed was the money, he needed the francs badly, needed to have them in his pocket that afternoon and tomorrow to carry him down into the village with him for the loaf of bread or the butter or eggs or the cheese he didn't have.

"How much does a pound make?" she said in a low, eager voice to him. "I mean, my father and mother aren't here today—but if you could tell me how many francs there are in a pound—I mean, you see, I have a little money but perhaps it wouldn't be enough money—"

"How much have you got?" the dark man said, and her heart repeated: "A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace."

"I have about two hundred and fifty francs," she said, the voice expiring, and the dark man said that would do.

That was the second of September, the day she broke the glazed swan on her desk open and gave him the money he said he had to have for the pound. The pound itself was locked away in his room and he said he would give it to her the next time he came up the road, and then he looked around quickly for a bit of wood and found it and stooped down and began drawing the lines out carefully on the earth. Now that his eyes were turned to something else, she could look at him; she could see how the hair grew on his head, black and neatly shaped and strong, and the thick dark fringe of lash along the eyelid, and the narrow wrist, and the sunburned hand with the stick held in it.

"Like that," he said, and she watched as if bewitched, the side of his face and the way his lips moved. "This was the game we used to play. We played it every day after school with the girls in the park, going home under the trees, before we had time to forget the lessons they taught us—the philosophers' and the poets', even Schiller's *Freiheit in der Erscheinung* which has been blotted out as if it was a mistake on the page — And then we put numbers, you see," he went on saying, "different numbers inside each one, and then a little stone, like this, a pebble to knock along with the foot—"

"Hop-scotch," said Judith, and because his eyes were on her the color

ran up her throat to the light line of her hair.

They played the jumping, one-legged game all that afternoon, first the dark man with the francs jumping in his pocket hopping and throwing his head back to laugh almost in delight when he didn't touch the lines; and then Judith hopping solemnly from square to designated square under the kitchen windows, the white rim of the eternally iced mountains all about them encircling the lower hills. And whether she had perceived them there when she came up from the village, or merely seen the record left in Judith's face, it was mother who cast the first stone at the stranger across the table that evening. She said:

"The baker-woman asked me today if I knew anything about that dark man who lives down the road, and I told her I didn't. She said people have seen him reading letters written in another language—German or Russian or something unfamiliar—"

"I wouldn't write a letter in any language for the next twenty-four hours, familiar or unfamiliar," father said, but he didn't look up from the copy of *Time* he was reading. He was trying to find out if there was going to be a war or if there wasn't and he didn't have a moment to spare.

Once in her room that night, Judith closed the door quickly, and caught her breath, and looked a long time at her face, at the front of it and the side of it, in the glass. War or the threat of war were nothing, and the broken swan with the money gone from it nothing, less than nothing, and without doing her teeth first she sat down in the lamplight at her desk and began copying the words out from page sixty-eight, with her hair falling bright gold across the open book.

"He shall never know how I love him," she wrote, "and that not because he's handsome but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same . . . My love for him resembles the eternal rocks beneath," with her finger running the length of each line to guide her eye to it.

The next day was Sunday, and she saw him sitting about midday on the café terrace underneath the trees, sitting with a glass of something cool before him just out of the dust that rose from under the wheels of the charabancs and the cars and buses hurrying through the village, and for an instant she thought of the pound note he hadn't given her yet, and then the thought ignited with shame and perished in her mind. He was sitting there alone with a newspaper open in the fingers of one hand, and he did not see her passing, for his head was dropped a little forward to read those words that traced the history of irretrievable steps up to the latest hour, the press not yet pronouncing the single syllable of final disaster loudly and clearly enough for everyone to hear. He sat there under the trees with his left hand up to his forehead, not looking at the men or the women or the cars passing, but looking in blind, quiet despair at what might have been the sight of the world, or at least his own world, falling bit by bit and irredeemably away.

On Monday he did not come up the road or down it, and Tuesday at lunch mother asked father what the exchange on pounds and francs was and, from behind the copy of *Life,* father said:

"It's just about what it's been for some time now. Around a hundred and seventy-five."

"Because that dark man down the road gave a pound note to the baker-woman," mother went on saying. "He didn't have the francs to pay the bill before he left, so he gave her that. She asked me how much it would make because the banks aren't giving any exchanges—"

"Before he left?" Judith said, putting her fork down. "Before he—" And suddenly the chairs swooned, and the table swung, and the windows in which the brilliant sun had stood were blotted out with dark.

"He went off last night. The baker-woman said he went off with the gendarmes," mother said, her voice hallooing to hearing across the vast terrible expanses of pain. "He's probably going to be interned for the—"

"Which dark man are you talking about?" said father, the words from behind the copy of *Life* as if called out in the hands' cupped megaphone from an incredibly safe, far shore.

"The one that looked like a waiter," mother said, and Judith stood up, swaying like the drunk, as the cortège of the dead went past her—Cathy's stabbed restless heart, and Heathcliff's eyes unclosing—and tried to walk towards the stairs.

J. PATRICK BYRNE:

Manager of the Abbey: The Late F. R. Higgins

Broadcasting from Dublin last winter, Ed Murrow mentioned that the most eagerly debated topic in some circles was neither war nor rumors of invasion, but the more important question: Who will be the next Manager of the Abbey? Frederick Robert Higgins had just died.

Born in the County of Mayo (forty-four years ago), Higgins grew up speaking our ancient tongue. A Connachtman, he learned to know and love all Ireland—from the naked magic of the West where the veil between humankind and the Otherworld of Gaelic folk imagination strains desperately taut and tenuous, to "the pastured royalties of Tara." Leaving a country school in Mayo at fourteen, Higgins began working as a clerk in Dublin, and later became an official in the Irish labor movement. His first poems appeared in Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Fein*. He was a foundation member of the Irish Academy of Letters, and Adjudicator of Poetry at Aonach Tailteann of 1928 and 1932. He was appointed a Director of the Abbey Theatre in 1935, and finally its Manager.

He was Manager when I first met him. In reply to a letter from me, he had invited me backstage one Saturday evening. I was early, of course, and while I waited in the draughty dimness, out on the brighter stage O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* was still in its first act, P. J. Carolan as "Captain" Boyle eagerly explaining:

> "You see, Juno was born an' christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an' Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, 'You should ha' been called Juno,' an' the name stuck to her ever since."

At length Higgins came, wearing a disreputable old trench coat. Thickset, with a mass of coarse dark hair turning grey, boyish and shy, but friendly. "I'm glad you wrote," he said. He took me to one of the dressing rooms and settled down to talk as though I were an old friend instead of an importunate stranger.

Though he has contributed *A Deuce o'Jacks*, an unusual play of eighteenth-century Dublin, to the Abbey stage, it was as a poet with the music of our old Gaelic singers in his verse that I first knew and admired him. But his talk that night was more about his friend Austin Clarke's work than his own. "I'm a lazy poet," he confessed. "I throw off a lyric only every two or three months." Contrasting himself with Clarke, who "sits at a table working for six hours at a stretch, sweating over it," he said, "I can't compose except when I'm walking outdoors. I say the poem over and over to myself, and write it down only when it's complete, though then I may have to correct it. I strive for simplicity, avoiding too obvious

attention to pattern, as in some of Clarke's."

And again, "I avoid like the devil any 'poetic' words." He instanced "amid," "blithe," and "ranns" in some verses I had shown him. "Stick to the prosaic, almost ugly word. Avoid easy alliteration. Remember Milton's 'simple, sensuous, passionate.'"

He was a great walker. From his "gallivanting in the country" while (as in one of his later poems) "Adam's red apple hops dry in my throttle," came such poems as "A Gallivanter to His Boots" and his beautiful "To My Blackthorn Stick":

> Lonesome, like me, and song-bred on Mount Nephin,
> You, also, found that in your might
> You broke in bloom before the time of leafing
> And shocked a world with light . . .
>
> Manured with earth's own sweat you stretched in saplings;
> Seasoned, you cored your fruit with stone;
> Then stript in fight, your strength came out of wrestling
> All winds by winter blown.
>
> I took that strength; my axe blow was your trumpet,
> You rose from earth, god-cleaned and strong;
> And here, as in green days you were the perch,
> You're now the prop of song.

His voice, and a fine voice he had, rings out in those exultant lines.

Though younger by a generation, Higgins influenced Yeats during a long association, which ripened into a real friendship. To the influence of Higgins' wild ballads is perhaps to be traced the strain of sculduddery that runs through many of the older man's last poems and songs. Musician as well as poet, an authority on Irish folk song, Higgins was of much service to Yeats, who was almost impervious to music. "In writing his own songs," Higgins records, "we worked together welding his occasionally meandering words to Gaelic tunes." Fruits of that collaboration were jointly edited Broadsides "made from Irish traditional songs, the songs of our friends and our own songs," beautifully printed and hand-colored at Elizabeth Yeats' Cuala Press.

Higgins' own most noticeable technical contribution is the effective use of elaborate assonance somewhat after the manner of the Gaelic singers. Listen to the whisper of *i*'s and *e*'s in this passage from "O You among Women":

> When pails empty the last brightness
> Of the well, at twilight-time,
> And you are there among women—
> O mouth of silence,
> Will you come with me, when I sign,
> To the far green wood, that fences
> A lake inlaid with light?

Or, mingled with regular rhyme, his patterned vowel music contributes to the unity and intensity of his verse. Higgins is not always successful in the difficult field of love, but take this stanza from "The Woman of the Red-Haired Man":

> But now while I lie down in bracken
> And foxes bark above my bed,
> As married maid to red O'Meara
> Your head lies by his head;
> With black eyelashes, flags of mourning,
> You mark the graves where love is laid;
> O dreamy head, by you I'm broken
> To run hare-brained and passion-flayed!

Here strict, masculine rhymes alternate at line-ends with assonance. These dissyllabic line-endings are supported also by internal assonance: bracken, bark, married, O'Meara, for example. The same music is carried over into the next stanza:

> With salt I'm cursed, by church I'm banished
> Beyond your parish mearing stones;
> This Lent I've left black fast and ashes
> With parish holy bones;
> Salt days at table, nights without marriage
> Leave milkless paps in your female clan—
> But after Easter who'll ease your passion,
> O woman of the red-haired man?

One of Higgins' finest poems, in memory of "Padraic O'Conaire, Gaelic Storyteller," might also be an elegy for himself. He, too, is

> . . . . gone again exploring;
> But now down glens of brightness, O he'll find
> An alehouse overflowing with wise Gaelic
> That's braced in vigor by the bardic mind,
> And there his thoughts shall find their own forefathers—
> In minds to whom our heights of race belong,
> In crafty men, who ribbed a ship or turned
> The secret joinery of song.
> Alas, death mars the parchment of his forehead;
> And yet for him, I know, the earth is mild—
> The windy fidgets of September grasses
> Can never tease a mind that loved the wild. . . .

Rising to go that night, I tried to thank him, but he waved my words aside. "When I was young everyone I approached helped me. We're all working in the same line. Goodbye, and good luck to you."

Speculation on what a poet might have written had he lived longer is rather fruitless. On the basis of his four or five booklets of verse,* one play, and a few scattered essays, Higgins cannot be considered a great writer. But he was a good poet, and a fine friendly Irishman.

*Editor's note: A selection of Higgins' poems, *The Gap of Brightness*, was published in America in 1940 by the Macmillan Company.

MARYA ZATURENSKA:
The Lonely Hotel

Always from brilliant windows peering,
The unknown woman's striking face,
All dark and white and shadow-lit
I see her wayward figure flit,
Forever here, then disappearing
In blue-grey gown, clouds of lace,
Her plumed black hat, her gloves of grey—
The spirit of that secluded place,
A great and weatherworn hotel,
Perched on a lake of birch and fir.

And floating eyes will follow her
From echoing corridor, suite, salon,
Or heavy shaded dining hall
Where whispers echo, die and fall
Indifferent, familiar,
She walks where furtive figures stir
Each solitary reveller,
Always tranquil and alone,
Where men in final stupor sit
And the last dwindling lights are lit.

Among tobacco fumes, the wine
I see her pure, pale aura shine,
I see her ear-rings' deepest jet,
See on her moving bosom glow
The antique old-gold cameo
Wherever her light footsteps pass
Falling, flowing from her dress
The scent of Parma's violet.

She hears as if from Limbo sent
A fiddle raised in harsh lament
Trailing her footsteps, piercing, sweet,
A song as sharp as death or sin
Sweeps upward from a violin,
Floats overhead and under feet.

Mysterious spirit of the wine,
Grave and reserved and punctual,

You pass between the drunken scene,
Casting a shadow on the wall
(Where grave and gay meet, intertwine)
Between the sacred and obscene,
Unheeding of dark winds that call,
But move where Time's inverted torch
Shines like a thin spire on a church.

I watch and watching trembling know,
That you will come, that you will go
From dull-draped rooms of horror sent,
To be each man's presentiment
There where the wines of Lethe flow
(As cool as water, bright as snow)
Neither on good or evil bent
Your image to each wine glass sent
Obscures the grief that all would bury,
The angel of the solitary.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE:

Oreithyia

Who took their forms and wrapped them in a myth
so that whirled down cold planes of time they cling
forever bonded in a web no smith
contrived, no spirit spun, and with the spring

ever divided reach through air, desire
over a spinning void the bright embrace
denied; ascend in leaves; repent in fire;
ride down the running feet, averted face

vanishing. Where the laurel mourns in green
veiling the moment stunned on his fleet track
sun streams on branch and bending breast between,
and the god's fingers pull the leaf-hair back.

Once the north wind swept down and in his stride
caught her whose feet cupped in blue wells expressed
pale body shining upward through the tide.
He turned and steering like a sea-bird, breast

into the blue wall straining rode the sky.

Her arms reap air; her hands with flight grieved shock
on a blind face. The brain wilts with a cry
in torn compliance on the naked rock.

And yet forever drawn, forever taken,
she faces over years' collapse her god.
Their way is filled with growth; the buds awaken;
pursuit stamps flowering heelmarks in the sod.

Down the sheer bays they strive, their ankles smash
green tissue, frost eluding water, reach
circle and poise where eastbound combers wash
land's end and shoulder of the ultimate beach

beside whose dripping rock the fugitive
kneeling in flaked surf makes the act her own.
Sinews of air and earth's white maiden live
their moment's issue, and a year is sown.

She knows the seed beneath the girdle free
with the wind's lean limbs and the grace he had,
and the long stride running the crumpled sea.
She feels the new flesh turning, and is glad.

A Letter to Twelve People

Bring back the early summer when you come
and nine o'clock, and the gray angles
of towers breaking gleams along wet cobbles,
and lamps spilling on tangles

of water plied like rope, and bring the night
kneeling quietly on Witham and the strain
of ivy on the broken cloister, and bring
the drip of water and the after-rain

stillness of thick trees sleeping in the stream
on their own quiet idols there. And you
will float these gifts along your path to me.
These are the things we knew:

a bridge, a weir, an inn, a fallen tree,
the wakening lights a net laid slack
on the gray city, and all that lived in these.
Bring them when you come back.

BERNARD KELLY:

Morning Comes Early in Pueblo

I jump up in my bed, and the very instant that I do, the alarm clock at the head of my bed begins to ring.

It is five o'clock. If I lie there and listen, I will hear alarm clocks going off in other rooms. Other mill hands will be shaking their heads and running their hands through their hair, because morning comes early in Pueblo.

All of us in this boarding house work in the steel plant. It is the largest steel plant west of the Mississippi—not very large compared with the huge plants in Gary and Youngstown and Pittsburgh—but large. The employees and the families of the employees call it "the mill," and everybody knows what they mean. The town people who do not work in the mill call it the steel works. But whether they work there or not, the town people, all of them, live off the mill. The stores, the banks, the loan sharks, the saloons, the beer joints, the dance halls, the bawdy houses, and everybody that lives there, are dependent on the mill. When the mill is running good, business is good, even though it may not be good in other towns around or in the country at large. And when the orders fall off and the mill is down, everybody is broke, no matter what the financial pages say. People say "This is a damn good town," or "This is a hell of a town," depending on how the mill is running.

Right now the mill is running good, and this is a damn good town. At night the sky is lit up by the reflection of the flowing steel and slag. You can see the red glow in the sky from a long ways off. From near the mill you can hear the clank and groan of machines and the pipe of whistles all night and all day. Outside the mill fence, close to the main gate, is the mill men's Y.M.C.A., a big four-story building with a theater, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, bowling alleys, and even a ballroom. There is a company store right back of the Y.M.C.A., where the mill employees cash their checks when they are working and which gives them credit when they are off. When you have run up a bill at the company store, the biggest part of your pay check goes to it until all the bill is paid, which is only right. You can buy almost anything in the store except a drink, and you can buy that at Kilgore's right across the street.

Yesterday afternoon I came off shift at three o'clock and went to the company store to cash my check and pay my bill. I got $45.10 for ten days' work, with my group insurance, my hospital benefit, and my Social Security deducted. Right away I walked across the street to Kilgore's to pay my bill there at the bar. I owed Kilgore $5.90 for drinks during the past two weeks. Then I paid my room and board and put the rest, except

for a dollar, in the bank. That is the way all the mill employees do who are not married. Until the next payday I will put everything on the cuff except maybe shows. I do not go to many shows. I would rather sit in Kilgore's evenings with the other mill hands and drink beer and talk about what happened during the day and what a bastard the boss is, because he is, and it makes me feel better to tell somebody so. It does not do to tell the boss he is a bastard, because he can fire you. There is a company union, but it doesn't do you much good if you tell the boss he is a bastard.

Whenever there is a bad accident in the mill, that is all they talk about at Kilgore's, and if you hang around there at night you will hear everybody's narrow escape. You will hear about how an open hearth furnace went out the back way and just missed one hand, and how another hand fainted in the rod mill and had a hot rod miss him by a hair, and how a loop of wire in the wire mill missed another man, but whipped out and cut the head off the man on the next machine. And always that old one about how a man is supposed to have dropped into a ladle of molten steel and burned up and how they just buried the ladle of steel in the mill yard. I have heard that story in three mills but I have never found anybody who knew the man who was killed, or his name, or just what part of the mill yard he was buried in. Bad accidents do not happen in the mill very often when you consider the number of men who work there, but still they happen. Just yesterday something happened to Sid Castle in the rail mill and a white hot rail ran right through his guts. The men in the rail mill tell all about it, while the rest of us sit there and listen, drinking our beer. They tell us that Sid had a premonition that something was going to happen to him and he even took out some more life insurance last month. We are glad to hear that, because we liked Sid. The men from the rail mill tell us that Sid did not make a sound when the hot rail skewered through him and lifted him up in the air like a chicken on a spit. They say he was alive for nearly ten minutes but he couldn't talk. He didn't seem to be suffering any. One of the men lit a cigarette for him and put it in his mouth but he couldn't smoke it and it rolled down the side of his face. They tell us about how the smell of burned meat was strong all day in the rail mill. They are full of admiration for a little Italian who took Sid's job for the rest of the shift, and walked right in the patches of blood where Sid had fallen.

We order another beer and drink it. At nine o'clock a four-piece orchestra that Kilgore hires begins to play in a little square ballroom between his two barrooms, and the old mill hands who would rather talk get up and go to some other beer joint where there is no orchestra. Juke boxes do not pay very well in the hangouts of real mill men because mill men would rather talk than listen to music, no matter how good the music is.

The young mill hands stay at Kilgore's, though, because they like to watch the girls that come in to dance. Some of them come with their

dates, usually high school boys or young mill hands, but most of the girls are stags. They walk in around nine oclock, two or three at a time, and go right past the bar without looking at it or the men who sit at it. They did not come to drink beer. They cluster around tables waiting for somebody to ask them to dance. I like to sit there, drinking my beer and watching the girls come in. Most of them are pretty, and very friendly, and will dance with anybody who is clean and not drunk. Sometimes we sit there making remarks about them as they come in, and inventing names for them. We build big stories about them and about how many times we have had them out and what we did and things like that. Some of the girls are real Americans and some of them are Slovenians and some are Italians. The best-looking girls are the Slovenian girls. The Italian girls are usually too dark and they almost never have good looking legs. The Slovenian girls are often blonde and they nearly always have nice shapes.

The four-piece orchestra begins to play at nine o'clock. There is an accordion, a saxophone, a cornet, and drums. Sometimes there are two accordions. The more accordions the better people like it. When the accordion isn't there, people go up and ask, "Where's the accordion player?" and then turn away disappointed. But whatever instruments they have, there are always four pieces and no more and they seem to play good music. At least I like it, but then I am no judge of good music. The mill hand who works my job on the night shift is a Slovenian fellow who has a radio phonograph that he bought at the company store and all kinds of classical records. He is always talking about how bad all the music is that you have to listen to. It is all jazz and all bad, he says. But the only time I ever saw him shed any tears over music was once when we were both listening to a juke box play "Red River Valley."

We watch the couples dancing on the floor. Except for two or three couples of older people who waddle around the outsides of the clear space, with the man working the lady's arm up and down, they all seem to like to get in the middle of the floor and jitterbug. The jitterbugs often run into the older couples and knock them out of step but it is the older couples who turn around and say "I'm sorry," and never the jitterbugs. The older couples do not seem to mind, though. Perhaps while they are dancing to Kilgore's four-piece orchestra, they forget that they are old. Or maybe they are embarrassed. Or, sometimes, they are drunk. When that is the case, they usually try to jitterbug themselves, or walk sideways to the music like they see the young people doing, but they always seem to miss the right rhythm and move more of their legs and hips and fannies than they ought to.

The jitterbugs swing and jump and pull each other around, and back apart and out to a stop with arms outstretched and palms clenched, jerking so hard that you would think it might pull their elbows out of joint. They do not seem to do the steps that jitterbugs are supposed to do according to the newspaper photographs and the short subjects at the

Avalon Theater. Either they have invented their own steps, or else the dances you see in the pictures are made up by professional dancers.

We sit there, drinking our beer and watching the girls dance. We never watch the boys. I don't know what the boys who dance at Kilgore's look like, except that they are always very dark-skinned and look like they need haircuts and baths. But the girls are always neat and clean and well-dressed. They wear short skirts and ankle sox and show a lot of their legs while they are dancing. We like to watch this. We sit there watching their skirts swirl up and up, showing the taut and twisting muscles in their thighs. When the orchestra stops playing the jitterbugs never applaud. If they know the orchestra is there, they do not show it. The girls push strands of hair out of their eyes and fan themselves with their palms, and the boys strut around waiting for an encore. If there is no encore, they walk off. They never applaud.

We wait until the orchestra plays a waltz and then we ask some of the girls to dance. We always start on a waltz because it is slow, and we do not know how to do the fast jitterbug dances.

I have been watching a girl who is not as pretty as some of the others, but who has beautiful legs and a fine body. Somebody dances with her friend, so I go over and ask her to dance. She does not say yes or no but just gets up and we start. She is a fine dancer and I can get along with her all right. She is wearing a very thin dress and I can feel her moist perspiring skin under my right palm. I ask her what her name is and she tells me that it is Cecelia. I ask Cecelia what, and she tells me that Cecelia is all that I need to know. We laugh a lot and have a good time talking to the orchestra, although the orchestra looks very bored. The drummer is getting pretty tight. He reaches down and takes up a bottle of beer and drinks half of it and drops the bottle.

After the dance is over, I ask Cecelia to have a sandwich or a drink. She introduces me to her girl friend, who is Helen, and the boy who has been dancing with Helen, and she calls him Snow. I ask them all to have a drink. They order cokes and I order another beer. Cecelia tells Snow that she cannot dance the fifth with him as she will have to go home after the third. It will be ten-thirty then, and she has to be in by eleven. Snow shrugs his shoulders. He balances his chair on the back two legs by clasping the edge of the table with his right hand, and signals to another girl by holding up five fingers. She nods. He turns around again and finishes his coke. I ask Cecelia if she lives very far. Not far, she says. I tell her that I work in the mill and that I will have to leave about ten-thirty, too. I ask her if I can take her home. Cecelia smiles and says maybe.

We do not dance the next dance or the next because Cecelia has promised them to two of the jitterbugs. But she has the third open and we arrange that she will dance it with me. I sit at the table while she dances and watch the boys jerk and twist and turn her. More than that I watch her skirt mount fluffily around her two lithe, shapely legs. When

she sees me watching her, she smiles at me, but does not try to hold her skirt down.

While we are dancing the third, she asks me what department I work in, and I tell her the Fourteen Inch mill. She jumps back from me in surprise and tells me that that is where her father works. I ask her father's name. It is Hralda. Pete Hralda.

I know Pete Hralda very well. He and I are good friends. We often walk over to the gate from the Fourteen Inch mill together. Pete Hralda looks very young to have a daughter like Cecelia.

There is no question about my credentials now. I am a mill hand and I not only know Pete Hralda, I work with him. It is news for Helen, to whom Cecelia relates it with much excitement. Helen tells me, while Cecelia goes to the rest room, that she thinks Pete Hralda is swell. He is swell and so is Mrs. Hralda, and so is Cecelia swell. But Cecelia's older brother, Ziggy, is not swell. He thinks he is too smart. But he is good looking; I gather that Helen is crazy about Ziggy Hralda. Helen tells me that all the girls are crazy about Ziggy but he doesn't go with any of them. He just goes with the gang. He goes to the Y and swims, or bowls, and in the summer he plays right short on the softball team of the Finishing Department. But he is too smart.

Cecelia has come back from the rest room and takes my hand. We will have to hurry. It is twenty minutes to eleven and she must be in by eleven. She tucks her arm under mine and waves goodbye to Snow, who shrugs again and waves a nonchalant hand. Snow is a swell dancer, she tells me. I ask her what his first name is. She tells me that is it. Snow. That is what everybody calls him. She doesn't know what his last name is. But he is a swell dancer. All the girls are crazy about him, but he is too smart. He only dances with the best dancers, Cecelia tells me, and all the girls are crazy to dance with Snow. But he is too smart.

We leave Kilgore's and walk away from his red and blue Neon beer signs, Cecelia indicating our direction by tugging at my arm. We walk slowly, and as soon as we are well away from the beer signs, and it is a little darker, I slip my arm around Cecelia. I wonder how old she is, because Pete Hralda looks very young to have a daughter like Cecelia. I have heard that Slovenian girls mature very young. She hums as we walk, and when we come to a dark place between street lamps, I stop and turn toward her and try to kiss her. At first she draws her head back with a laugh, but then she tucks the fingers of one hand in my collar and I kiss her. The kiss she gives me is a prim, very young kiss. Then she slaps my cheek lightly and we walk on. I ask her if she often comes to Kilgore's to dance and she says not often, once or twice a week.

The Hralda house is a small house set in a row of small houses, with each fenced-in yard as trim and neat as the spokes on a new bicycle. Cecelia tells me not to go up to the door with her. She does not want to wake the family. I kiss her again and she tells me that she likes me. She

asks me to come over some evening and tells me that Pete will be glad to see me. She will be glad to see me too. Ziggy will be glad to see me. She tells me that Ziggy is her older brother. He is real swell-looking, and all the girls are crazy about him. But she will have to go in now, because Ziggy will be coming in soon and she has to be in when he comes home. I promise her that I will come over very soon. She kisses me quickly and runs into the yard, closing the gate. I see her ankle sox dark on her white legs as she runs up to the door. She waves to me. Then she disappears.

I walk slowly back to Kilgore's in the moonlight, thinking of the Hraldas: of Pete who is so young to have a daughter like Cecelia, and of Ziggy who is good-looking but knows it, and who prefers to go with his gang. I think mostly about Cecelia. She is young, very young. It is too bad, for she is very lovable, and I am beginning to think that she is the prettiest of all the girls who come to Kilgore's. Perhaps she is not the prettiest, but she is very pretty.

The sky is reddening. They are tapping a heat from Blast Furnace C, and it is getting late. I have to get back to my boarding house and go to bed. Tomorrow, I shall walk from the Fourteen Inch mill to the Clock House with Pete Hralda, and I shall find out how many games his son, Ziggy, played with the Finishing Department's softball team last summer, and how many hits he made. Then I shall ask him how old Ziggy is. And I shall ask him about some other things. Just now I must climb into the painted iron bed and go to sleep.

BREWSTER GHISELIN:
Rattler, Alert

Slowly he sways that head that cannot hear,
Two-jeweled cone of horn the yellow of rust,
Pooled on the current of his listening fear.
His length is on the tympanum of earth,
And by his tendril tongue's tasting the air
He sips, perhaps, a secret of his race
Or feels for the known vibrations, heat, or trace
Of smoother satin than the hillwind's thrust
Through grass: the aspirate of my half-held breath,
The crushing of my weight upon the dust,
My foamless heart, the bloodleap at my wrist.

BYRON VAZAKAS:

For Those Who Died Like Anarchists

Between the prison gate and the thoroughfare, the past
assumed its present. Sunlight waited at the curb
marking a casual cigaret, and the homely gutter
drained blue wash-water.

When they approached, time resembled death. Strangely,
the blood upon their hands was their own. Such guilt
was obsessed by no flag. Children watched them deprive
their future of its finality.

The clouds grew tall in the sun that day, and when
they raised their eyes to them, acquired the virtue of
the rose. Seldom happy, marking time, but like
children who wait for summer

This was their imago, their idol laid down without
comment or inscription: *What hurts is wrong.*
All knew it, but somewhere, in a century,
anaesthesia became an opiate.

The few steps forward to death or backward to recant,
what did it matter? Bludgeoned in a car was not
an oriental choice where law enacts the imposition
of the many on the few.

When Rosa entered the car, the sun fell away
from her face, and her sight diminished to an X
on the pavement, chalked by a child
for a memory after trouble.

After the departure, the children returned to play,
and were tired at evening, or until their parents
called. The corner grocery was locked, the awnings
drawn up; a policeman

Sauntering through the twilight, and swinging his club,
sniffed the suspicious silence and the dust,
and rattled at the door of a vacant house.
Empty. Empty. Empty.

MILTON KAPLAN:

Pogrom

Listened: in the dusk he listened, head upturning;
hound uprearing in his skull, he listened:
heard nothing and still he listened; heard the stillness
before the rain: sensed that: then heard the patter,
the dry trickle of feet as they came running:
heard his name: called back, hound pacing through
his brain: running; found himself running,
flecking his lips with quick darts of his tongue:
yelling: heard himself yelling, holding his throat
and yelling: running faster: hound running faster,
suddenly baying, and still running: calling:
"What's up?" he shouted: heard himself shout,
and held his throat: "What's up?" heard curses, low
and guttural: eyes straining in the darkness:
felt the shape of men around him; felt
them brush against him; felt them lumber past him:
heard someone sobbing in his ear in time
with running feet: the hound still baying madly,
whirling madly around his skull, whirling:
running: found himself running, wheezing: pressed
his lips between his teeth: saw lights and flowed
into the baying mob, the hound now hurtling
against the door with whimpering cries: heard curses,
yet pressed his lips between his teeth, feeling
the hound hurtling against his skull, splintering
the door: pressed forward: strained forward, holding his throat
and then the door burst open; out streaked
the hound, jaws slavering: "Kill them!" he shrieked;
"Kill them!"

VENARD McLAUGHLIN:

The Soldiers

The two mud-covered men sat side by side in a gully at the edge of what had recently been heavily timbered land. Now the trees were blasted and broken. Many white-torn branches littered the ground, some of them still bearing green leaves.

A few hundred yards away beyond sterile broken ground a road roared with tanks and trucks and marching men. The roar was dull under a low sky still heavy with rain.

One of the men bandaged the other's arm. He himself wore a dirty cap of bandage wound low over his forehead. He squinted past a smoking cigarette stub as he worked while the other looked on calmly.

"That was very bad while it lasted," said the bandager. "We are fortunate to be still alive."

"That is true," said the other. "But it stopped so suddenly. Are those our men or the enemy in the road?"

"Hold still, if you please, until I've finished this . . . I can't say for sure. Everything is so splattered with mud."

"The wise thing for us, then, is to stay here until we learn what has happened."

"That is unquestionably the wise thing."

"It is also the desirable thing. Here, we can rest. Here, we can see and not be seen."

"That also is true," said the bandager. He finished his task and leaned back sighing, looking about. "I dislike such destruction. Before we came here this was a beautiful forest. Now you can see for yourself what it is. I should never have become a soldier."

"Nor I," said the other. "At home I was a school master. I prefer schoolmastering greatly."

"Is that a fact? Or is that a manner of speaking?"

The school master looked up puzzled. "I beg your pardon?"

"For instance, take my case. I was a chemist. But that was a manner of speaking. Like most men I needed to earn a living. For that purpose I was a chemist." He stared thoughtfully at his mud-caked hands. "Actually, the point of my life was to draw a wolf."

The school master frowned. "As a hunter, may I ask, or as an artist?"

"As I have said, I was merely a chemist. My life was simply centered on the drawing of a wolf."

The school master looked carefully at his companion. "Perhaps," he said gently, "it would be better for you to lie down and rest a bit. Is the wound painful?"

"A bare scratch, I assure you. No, I am not confused. I am merely clumsy in my way of putting it. Perhaps, since that road may contain either friend or enemy and we are forced to remain here in hiding for a time, perhaps it would not bore you to hear of my wolf."

"I am very curious," said the other.

The chemist drew tobacco and papers from a pocket and the two men rolled cigarettes. A small fighting plane dropped suddenly from the clouds over the road with cackling machine guns raking the men and machines below. The school master raised his head cautiously to peer over the edge of the gully. He sat again lighting his cigarette.

"It is too murky to make out the markings. That plane may belong to us or the enemy; and we still do not know who marches in the road."

"In that case," said the chemist, "we are very wise to remain here. Now, if my wolf will not bore you—"

"By no means."

"Very well. But I must tell you that my father was, during his life, a very wealthy and successful man. It was because of his wide-spread business interests, as a matter of fact, that this thing of the wolf came about. My father had become very wealthy at the time of the last war trading not only with our own people and the government, but with the enemy as well—a thing which, of course, could not happen in this war which is a struggle between Good and Evil—"

"Assuredly not," said the school master. "Such a thing is today unthinkable."

"—and for some months at the war's close my father and I were in Russia where he had reason to fear the loss of great investments. It was there the wolf thing happened."

The school master waited a moment in silence for the other to go on. "Yes?"

"I scarcely know how to say it," the chemist said. "You must know, also, that my father was a great, bearded man with the long dark eyes of our people. His voice could be thunder or soft as a woman's. He was an intensely vital man, strong and arrogant. He was never much troubled over little matters of ethics. You will think I am disloyal to his memory."

"Not at all," said the school master.

"You must, of course, see how he was to understand. A wholly objective observer would possibly sum up his habit of mind as predatory. I shall not say that."

"Of course not."

"But at any rate the Russians are a stupid people and my father had, in spite of their internal disorders at that time, arranged things satisfactorily and we entrained for home. Now, if you remember, there were difficulties at that time. Our train was stopped, the crew shot at once, and the rest of us herded out on a flat snow-covered plain. In the moonlight the whole affair was full of shadow and confusion. I was very young and

although badly frightened I was intensely excited and wide-eyed as well. My father kept me close at his side and when they had searched us and were lining us up to be shot he suddenly leaped forward, struck down several men, seized one of those hard little Russian horses, and sent him galloping with us across the plain."

"My word!"

"Yes indeed. That was my father. They fired two volleys after us, but for some reason no one followed. At the second volley my father sagged forward against me, but he straightened almost at once and we made for some low craggy hills not far distant where we found a small cave and sent the horse on with a slap on its rump. In that cave my father died. He had been hit badly in that second volley."

The school master clucked sympathetically.

"Now, what follows is really the important part," said the chemist. "You must know that this cave we came to was, to the eye, scarcely more than an indentation under an eyebrow of rock. In the inside darkness there was every indication that it was no more than this. Now, imagine for yourself how it was when, with my father's head in my arms, with his last breath still sounding in my ears, a magnificent wolf stalked from the blank wall at my back, passed me and loped gracefully down the hill to the plain. You will understand how I dropped my father's head and ran to the cave mouth, staring after that beast. You can understand my thoughts. Where had he come from? In the darkness had we mistaken space for rock wall? Why had the beast not attacked? You can see I was young and highly excited. Without weighing consequences I ran after the wolf fascinated by the beauty of him in the moonlight. I have never before nor since seen anything so wholly beautiful. When he disappeared I turned to go back to the cave, and I could not find it. I searched until dawn, becoming hopelessly confused and bewildered. I never again saw that cave."

The school master cleared his throat and stared thoughtfully down at his bandaged arm. The chemist sighed and continued.

"It would be irrelevant to relate how finally I came to my home. The point is that ever since that night I have tried in vain to capture in some manner the beauty of that black running animal. It has become the purpose and center of my life. You will appreciate, of course, that as I grew up I realized the reason for the staggering impression of that night." The chemist raised his eyes to the shattered trees overhead. "I need scarcely point out that the beast was in reality the soul of my father."

The school master straightened. "I have heard of such things."

"And I have seen it. Thus the centering of my life upon this problem is not really esthetic. It is also a search to know myself. For in the lines of that beast was the essence of all that my father was. When I finally draw it I shall know my father, and since I am his son I shall know something of myself. I hope you can see how everything else in my life is

subordinate to drawing the wolf?"

"Perfectly," said the other. "I am grateful to you for revealing this thing to me. For I can see that I, too, am only what I am as a manner of speaking. I can see that almost unconsciously my life has been centered, as has yours, on something to which all else is secondary. At the risk of boring you—"

"Please," said the chemist. "Don't think of that." He raised his head to stare at the road still full of machinery and men. "It is an excellent way to pass the time." He lighted another cigarette and lay back comfortably. "Think of it. Here we are exposing our souls to each other, in a manner of speaking, yet had we not been wounded in defending this forest and crawled into this gully we might never have known of each other's existence."

The school master's head jerked up and he stared at the other. "Pardon," he said at last. "For a moment I thought you said *defending* this forest."

"And so I did," said the chemist, "but whether we did or did not do it is beyond me."

Under its caking of mud the school master's face became tense and his eyes darkened. "But we were *attacking*. Surely you remember how we crawled on our bellies over this barren stretch under the enemy's merciless fire."

"No! You are confused," said the chemist. But now he looked again at his companion. "We lay in the wood, *defending*—"

"No, no! It is you who are confused. As I know anything, we attacked!"

"And I know beyond possible doubt that we were defending!"

The two men confronted each other. The school master moistened his lips.

"Can—can it be?"

"It seems utterly inconceivable," said the chemist.

"Yet, you were defending?"

"Yes."

"And we were attacking. Then—"

"Then," said the chemist, "we must be enemies."

"I—I doubt our sanity. Look, is not your uniform of this material?" He scraped dried mud from his tunic.

The chemist did likewise. They looked at the cloth and then at each other.

"We are enemies, then," said the school master.

The chemist drew a long breath. "In that case we have a duty."

"We have indeed. We must kill each other."

"Unquestionably. Personal preferences in a war such as this of Good and Evil—" The chemist broke off in embarrassment.

"It is truly a war of Good and Evil," said the school master, "but we

are gentlemen. We will not discuss which is which."

"We will not indeed. But the duty remains."

"Beyond doubt."

"Still," said the chemist, "we are not yet aware whose people march in yonder road."

"That is true."

"Therefore, if we fire our rifles at each other the marchers will undoubtedly hear the shots and come to investigate. Then, if one of us survives he may fall into enemy hands and be himself killed."

"Yes," said the school master. "It is a needless and foolish risk."

"That is my thought. I therefore propose that you relate your story to me while the army passes by. Then, when it has gone, we may kill each other in comparative safety."

"That seems very wise," said the school master. "Here, then, is what your story of the wolf showed me of myself. As I have said it has become a conscious centering of my life only during the past few minutes. But I can now see how my whole life has been built around it. As a matter of fact—" The school master paused in confusion. "These things are hard to say in words, are they not? It is like stepping naked into a public street."

"Exactly. But please go on."

"Well, then," said the school master, "I will say it. From earliest childhood it has been my ambition to make a plum skin stand alone. Many people, in fact all the people I have ever known, eat plums whole, skin and all. I have never been able to do that. From infancy I have peeled plums and I have never peeled one without either trying or wishing to try to have the skin stand, bloated with air, as though the thing were still whole." He rubbed his nose and flakes of dried mud fell over his chest. "So stated, it seems ridiculous. Particularly by one, like myself, who holds doctorates from the world's leading universities."

"Not at all, not at all," said the chemist. "Have you ever succeeded?"

"Never. But I have never given up."

"Nor I. I have never drawn the wolf, but I too have never given up."

The clanking of tanks and march of feet grew fainter.

"But tell me," said the school master hurriedly and a little loudly, "during this war have you had occasion to continue your drawing?"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't. In war there is room for nothing but war."

"I have also found it that way. Not once, until today, have I thought of my life-long ambition."

"War makes many things unnecessary," said the chemist. "Perhaps that is why it has been so long and universally popular."

"Perhaps," said the school master. "Do you notice? It has become very quiet."

"Yes. The army has gone."

The school master sighed. "We must then kill each other, I presume."

"We are enemies," said the chemist. "We have that duty."

The two men moved slightly apart and then raised their rifles.

"Pardon me," said the school master apologetically. "But with this injured arm—. Would you be good enough to adjust my sight? It is at present set high. That would, I am afraid, be incompatible with the instant circumstance."

"Allow me," said the chemist. He adjusted the sight and handed back the weapon. Then he sat up very straight. "By the way. Doesn't it strike you as being abnormally quiet?" Both men lifted their heads, listening. "A thought comes to me. Suppose an armistice has been declared? Suppose the fighting has stopped?"

The school master lowered his rifle. "An armistice!"

"Then we should be murderers!"

"We should, certainly! It has become very quiet!"

"Very," said the chemist. "I have no desire to become a murderer."

"Nor I. It is quite possible an armistice has been declared."

"Quite."

The two men looked thoughtfully at each other.

"In that case," said the chemist, "our duty seems clear. We must try to find our respective armies."

"That is the only thing left to do."

"Then we will know exactly our position."

"Exactly."

Both men stood up and saluted. After a few steps the school master turned.

"I suppose if the war is over you will return to the center of your life and continue trying to draw the wolf?"

The chemist paused and nodded. "And you will attempt to make plum skins stand alone?"

"Yes."

"Of course," said the chemist, "if the war is not over—" he shrugged, smiling. "I shall be too absorbed."

"And I, too," said the school master. "Good day."

"And to you also a good day," said the chemist.

DUDLEY FITTS:

Experiments in Life and Death

KENNETH PATCHEN: *The Journal of Albion Moonlight.* Privately published.

HENRY MILLER & MICHAEL FRAENKEL: *Hamlet,* vol. 2. Carrefour.

I

This Moonlight Journal runs to 313¾ pages and sells for a fancy price. Henry Miller, whose judgment I respect, finds it "a work of unmistakable genius." It may be so. At any rate it is a work-out: for the compositor, unless he is the one who set up *Finnegans Wake*; for the reader, unless he sleeps with *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* and a complete file of *Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang*; and for that sad dog the critic most of all, who must read on, however tasteless the matter, however tedious the job. In the remarks that follow, all forms of the word *to be* are to be understood as forms of *to seem.* I cannot say that the Journal *is* this or that; only that it *appears* to be.

The basic plot, then, is a kind of pilgrimage involving a group of neurasthenic persons whose leader is A. Moonlight and whose ostensible goal is one Roivas. (At this point the reader should spell Roivas backward and clap his hands & crow.) These persons are beset by pursuers with guns and dogs, and these I take to symbolize conventional war-making freedom-hating society. They never exactly catch up with the pilgrim fugitives, and, indeed, as the journal progresses one loses sight of them altogether. But while they are with us their endeavors do not seem entirely unjustifiable, for their quarry is an unlovely gang, to be sure—the women are all nympholets in the more interesting stages of that disease, and the men are rapists, fornicators, murderers, abductors, Corinthians, drunkards, and crackers of antediluvian ventral jokes. And all of them, men and women, are eminently committable.

The Journal which records the escapades of this happy band is frequently interrupted by dream-episodes, soliloquies, verses, rhapsodies, surréaliste excursions, and typographical *jeux d'esprit.* These are the free associations of A. Moonlight's brain, and from them some idea of the Chief Sufferer can be formed. Mr. Moonlight is a violent, even homicidal man. He is obsessed by two things: loathing for the War and sexual desire. The former is constantly launching him upon seas of eloquence which all too often boil up into storms of rant. The latter infects a good half of his pages with a sophisticated version of the scribblings on the walls of a high school lavatory. Moonlight enjoys the society of various young ladies with the wasteful habit of rubbing brandy into what are repeatedly described as "the little brown eyes" of their breasts. Why they

do this, I do not know. And Moonlight has read a great deal—almost as much as he has suffered, I should say—and this erudition comes out in a galaxy of the most whimsical and unexpected puns and japes. Hear him:

> Natasha greeted me warmly. "So glad you could come. We were just talking about you."
> "I tune my instrument at your door," I said.
> "The Quigleys have a new heir," she said.
> "And may he live to die in love and rest," I said.
> "Have you seen Mr. Honour? He was asking after you."
> "Ah, Natasha, how kind you are to lie to me."
> "But I'm not lying to you."
> "Nor laying for me," I said sadly.

Effortless, just like pressing a button. And yet I prefer him in this vein—when he is, to quote exactly a mis-spelling which I am sure was not of his compositor's making, "pouring over the pages" (p. 277)—to Moonlight the poet, Moonlight cataloguer, even Moonlight the Thinker; for his poetry derives from some of Mr. Patchen's less happy inspirations; his catalogues were done better by his masters Rabelais, Burton, Sterne, and Whitman; and his thinking, while it is sometimes arrestingly phrased, seldom achieves anything more significant than so admirable but primary an idea as "I would crawl a thousand miles on my hands and knees if that would stop the war."

It would not stop the war, nor does Mr. Moonlight think that it would. Yet it is significant that this line closes what is perhaps the most moving passage in the book: a long sermon on intolerance and hatred ("There is so much hate in the world") in the course of which the ghosts of the Jews in Poland, the lynched negroes, and Sacco and Vanzetti are tellingly instanced. For all its essential love (as opposed to the welter of epidermal loving), the Journal is full of hate—hate directed at objects worthy of hate, to be sure, but none the less hate; and hateful; and, as it is hateful, distorting and corrupting a theme that was neither shaped nor sound in the first place.

The *accidentia* of the book, like Moonlight's poetry, are almost entirely derivative. From *Finnegans Wake* Moonlight has learned of irrelevant and funny marginal glosses and running commentary, but one turns back to Joyce with relief. From Cummings he has learned all sorts of typographical tricks, including the breaking up of a consecutive text by the insertion of a dispersed sentence in immense capitals. From Rex Warner's *The Wild Goose Chase* he has derived his pilgrim theme, and many of the episodes of sex and mass violence. From Joyce, again, he has taken over the recondite and the smutty allusions and puns; and he has failed to come within leagues of his teacher. From assorted surréalistes he has acquired the obvious tricks of the trade, but his use of them betrays no idea on his part as to what they are for: instead of being organic, as they are in Miller at his best, they are a hat old beyond the late

Max Keezer's yearning, a photochrome of fireworks, a Jesus-I'm-a-modernist exhibition. And they remove the last fun from the Journal, since the best it could have been was fun, leaving this reader, at any rate, with the lugubrious conviction that A. Moonlight is in parlous need of two things: a good sedative and a satisfactory sexual experience.

II

It is hardly a compliment to Messrs. Miller and Fraenkel to record my pleasure in turning from A. Moonlight and his brandy-breasted beauts to the second volume of their apparently endless *Hamlet*. It would be a profound pleasure in any event; it just happens that Moonlight sharpens it.

This is the second volume of *Hamlet*, the first having been brought out by Carrefour in 1939. It would perhaps be well to forestall at this point any possible rush to the bookstores on the part of Shaksperean scholars in search of further light. This *Hamlet* is not designed to add to the researches of Professors Bradley, Stoll, Van Doren, Kittredge, Knight, and Ridley. So far as Shakspere goes, it has nothing more outstanding to offer than Mr. Fraenkel's theory, delivered with a disproportionate amount of impressiveness, that "if ghosts seem rather removed to us, they were quite real to the Elizabethans." (There is, to be fair, a frantically amusing attempt on the part of Mr. Miller to remember the plot of the play, which he has not read for years; and there is Mr. Fraenkel's perfectly sound advice to him, that he should avoid rereading the play at all costs.) But the book is not about *Hamlet*: it is about Hamlet—and Hamlet is Mr. Miller (says Mr. Fraenkel) and Mr. Fraenkel (says Mr. Miller) and you (I suppose) and Mr. Moonlight (I fear) and I (*consensu omnium*).

The form is epistolary. A few years ago, the authors decided to compose a correspondence of a thousand pages on a theme. The original idea was "to take a badly written story by some celebrity and rewrite it in *our* fashion." The final choice was between *The Merry Widow* and *Hamlet*, and *Hamlet*—to our great profit—won. Any work would have served almost as well (I should have recommended Wagner's *Siegfried* myself, with Mr. Jacques Barzun to serve as literary umpire, correcting the text with admonitory footnotes and generally seeing that Berlioz Got His Due), but the Dane, being pretty nearly anything an ingenious mind wants to call him, is an admirable referent for the kind of philosophico-psychologico-scatologico-anthropological discourse with which these writers amuse themselves and us. Even Berlioz has never managed to get his whole fist into so many pies.

I am probably disproportionately interested in the technics of writing, and for that reason my strongest reaction to this *Hamlet* is to its style. Another man would very likely be excited by its ideas; but these as often weary me as stimulate me. For one conviction, however, I am quite willing to go out on as many limbs as the Department of Dendrology will provide,

and that is the conviction that in contemporary English prose style Henry Miller has no peer, unless it be Joyce. He writes with the ease of an angelic acrobat. There are many who are as gifted as he in narration, in epigrammatic illumination; any cautious Sixth Former knows how to be more elegant, more correct; but in his hands the language comes to life, breathing, luminous, dynamic to the least particle. It is for this reason that the two *Tropics,* which are negligible as novels, are nevertheless great literature in our time; and it is this—for his manner is contagious, and Mr. Fraenkel writes much more effectively here than in *Bastard Death* or *Werther's Younger Brother*—it is this that makes these letters memorable reading.

If you keep your mind on *Hamlet* you are lost. I refer to the play. What is compelling here is Miller's analysis of Fraenkel's preoccupation with the idea of death, and Fraenkel's equally scathing (and equally acute) analysis of Miller's preoccupation with Chinese philosophy; what is valuable is both writers' estimate of American civilization and their speculations (gloomy, Albion, gloomy) as to its probable future. The fact that many, or, if you prefer, most of the ideas are perverse, interested, what our aunts called "morbid," matters little in comparison with the enormous vitality of the correspondents. There are long passages on both sides that are too fine for any anthology of prose that I know of—Fraenkel's description of his experiences on the boat returning from Europe, and in the New York hotel that was recommended to him; Miller's account of the cultivated bawd and the reasons why that day he read no more, at any rate in Shakspere; and the whole tremendous flight of philosophical description on the subject of Lourdes.

There is no connexion between *Albion Moonlight* and *Hamlet* except that both books are in a sense experimental. But taken together they suggest at once a confirmation and a perversion of Notker's old saw *In medio vitae*—for Albion M., bellowing life, is really instinct with death; while *Hamlet,* with mortuary doodads on every page, forces its way by its very exuberance to a triumphant life in death.

HERBERT J. MULLER:

The Illusion Fades

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Between the Acts.* Harcourt, Brace.

Virginia Woolf's valedictory novelette is a parable of the dissolution of our world. It is a strange, ashy, quietly desperate book, sounding "like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned." It is a sadder book, I feel, than pious reviewers have indicated. For it is itself pallid, feeble, sickly. I was moved by it more as a revelation of Virginia Woolf's personal tragedy than as a symbolic representation of England's.

What happens "between the acts" is all foreshadowing of drama to come. On a June day in 1939, a party of English gentry gathers on a country estate to see a pageant given by the villagers. The pageant is a queer travesty on the history of England. Things go wrong, the illusion sometimes fails, the wind blows some of the words away; but the audience hears and understands enough to be troubled—especially by the finale, *England: Ourselves,* in which the mummers grotesquely caper about, flashing mirrors. The gentry can see themselves only as "scraps, orts and fragments." Lest they miss the point, a mysterious voice speaks from the bushes: "Let's talk in words of one syllable, without larding, stuffing or cant. Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme. And calmly consider ourselves." After they have been considered, their triviality and hollowness calmly noted, they are treated to such omens as a formation of airplanes droning overhead. Then they disperse, chattering, a little upset but unimproved; the mysterious author of the pageant steals away alone, with a miserable sense of frustration; the hosts are left to their private futilities. As the story ends at nightfall, husband and wife, who have been avoiding each other all day, prepare to wrangle over their unhappy married life: "Then the curtain rose. They spoke."

That the curtain should not rise until the end, and then upon a domestic quarrel, is no doubt a deliberate irony. But the scene is more profoundly irrelevant and inconsequential than Virginia Woolf intended. What the couple said does not matter, for they are neither interesting as individuals nor significant as symbols. Although the characters in her best work are not robust, they are sharply etched, vividly painted; here they are wraiths who can scarcely be seen. The lady with red fingernails who represents lust, or the stockbroker who symbolizes something by crushing a snake and getting blood on his sport-shoes, is as pale and shadowy as the putty-colored young man who represents perversion. Moreover, we are not made to feel that their pallor comes from the sickness of their society; it is chiefly the failing of their creator. Altogether, both character and incident are too slight to support the portentous meaning they are designed

to. The meaning remains in the atmosphere, behind or around but not in the story; it is not adequately dramatized, actually rendered. We are supposedly witnessing the prelude to world catastrophe; we hear a continuous rumble and stir in the wings, but we see only some fluttery phantoms getting agitated over their tea.

We are also given, needless to add, many vivid impressions of life in particular, at once luminous, delicate, and acute. Virginia Woolf's prose style remains one of the finest expressive instruments in modern fiction. Yet the notable passages are too often only passages, impressions by the way. Her characteristic method is not well suited to her dark purpose here. She darts all around her subject, rendering exquisitely the nuances, the overtones, the ripples of the experience; she does not come to grips with her subject, go really into and through the experience. Her deeper meanings are blurred or scattered by all the shimmer and flutter. Then at times, as if she were no longer sure of her artistry, she resorts to a pretty obvious symbolism or speaks heavily in words of one syllable. Many passages go like this: "She used to stay . . . with an uncle, a clergyman; who wore a skull cap; and never did anything; didn't even preach; but made up poems." This gasping manner may be suited to characters who are "orts, scraps and fragments," but it becomes an irritating mannerism.

All in all, Virginia Woolf was simply not up to so momentous and desperate a theme. The strain was too great for her; her own rhythm was broken, her own rhyme forgotten; and the failure of the illusion in *Between the Acts,* which unhappily closes her distinguished career, is still not surprising. She could do everything, Frank Swinnerton has remarked, that a novelist could do who had not lived. She did her best in mid-career, in *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*—not to mention her brilliant essays. In her later novels, however, she drew steadily farther away from life, into the drawing-room world where the most severe stress could produce only a refined distress, typified by the character in *The Waves* who cried, "Now I will wrap my agony inside my pocket-handkerchief." She was not a mystic, a brooding philosopher, or an ironic onlooker; she was a gentlewoman of superfine culture who had ceased to look on at all. Then war broke out, and her world collapsed under the terrific pressure of life. She was too genuinely civilized to shut herself up in a cozy room of her own, too intense to wrap her feelings inside a pocket-handkerchief: "I cannot go on any longer in these terrible times," she wrote.

There is accordingly no question of her integrity or her courage. She was never insincere or irresponsible; in the feeblest passages here she still speaks "without larding, stuffing or cant." Yet her very fidelity to her vision makes plainer her limitations. Thus her last picture of England is of an utterly effete society. Although she concedes her characters some simple decency—more than the kindness to cats and the love of flowers remarked by the mysterious voice—she nowhere represents the gallantry, fortitude, and unpretentious heroism exhibited in the nation's response to a

leader who promised only blood, sweat, toil, and tears. I do not believe that she was blind to these sturdier qualities, or cynical about them. But apparently she could not respond whole-heartedly, and certainly she could not do justice in her kind of fiction to the words and deeds that can give these times the "tragic dignity of history." One reason she could not go on was that as an artist she was left without subject matter.

ALLEN TATE:

Not Double, Single

W. H. AUDEN: *The Double Man.* Random House.

The older I get the less I feel like writing about the poetry of my contemporaries, except by way of excerpt and generalization; I am so envious of their successes and so impatient of their failures that I cannot fool even myself with the pretense of impartiality. Envy and impatience make a hard dilemma but envy and gloating would make an easy one. I cannot gloat over the failures; I want poetry to be good; and when it is very good I envy it. I am plagued by this unhappy state when I go through Auden's *The Double Man;* I can see in it a great deal that is brilliant and entertaining, and in the sonnets much that is brilliant and moving; but in passage after passage the main poem, "New Year Letter," slides off into a fast one—the "hand is quicker than the eye" of parlor magic—or in places it dissolves into the annotations, of which there are 87 pages to 55 of poetic text. And the sonnet sequence, called "The Quest," ought to be much better—how much I do not know, but at least as good as the sonnets in Auden's first book or those in *Journey to a War*; and I think they would have been that good had he put in about fifteen more minutes on each sonnet, which would have come to a total of five hours for the sequence: not much as poets count time.

Anything else that I can say about this book will be detail for what I have just said. At the end of Part II of "New Year Letter" Auden brings in "the devil who controls / The moral asymmetric souls," and after telling us that "He cannot always fool us thrice" with lies but will give us half-truths that we can "synthesize," he describes the role of the double man:

> So, hidden in this hocus-pocus,
> There lies the gift of double focus,
> The magic lamp which looks so dull
> And utterly impractical
> Yet, if Aladdin use it right,
> Can be a sesame to light.

Here the hand is quicker than the eye; but Auden himself reveals the trick in his note to the passage. The asymmetric souls are the lazy romantics who refuse, says Auden, to recognize a paradox when they meet one; then he goes on in the next note to tell us that the devil is the father of poetry, "for poetry might be defined as the clear expression of mixed feelings." Very good; and the notes are more illuminating than the verse text because they are direct and clear. The metaphorical expression of the idea in the verse text only muddles it up; it is, in fact, an example of the sort of romanticism which it purports to expose. We may get at it this way:

The figure of Aladdin's lamp is brought in to resolve the paradox; rub it and we get light. The figure is further complicated by introducing from another Arabian Night the word "sesame" (the name of a grain) which, spoken, opens up the robbers' cave. So we get an equivalence: the wonders of the cave are light, and light is a stock symbol (that's nothing against it) for truth. Now in this casual but actually sophisticated and complex metaphor the main idea of conflict, of paradox, or, in terms of the knowing mind, of double focus which must see and, in terms of poetry, must dramatize, is shunted off and lost altogether. The subject of this passage is paradox; it is presented monistically in a single image of light. So the real paradox here is one which I believe Auden was not aware of: the contradiction between his idea and the metaphor for it.

Throughout the poem there is a certain inadequacy of his command over metaphor which makes his elaborate notes necessary or at any rate illuminating. His poetic language leaves something out; it would be better to say that it can't get it all in. And when a poet can't get it all in, when his language is too simple for his subject, he is ignoring some of it; and I think that Auden would agree that such a poet is the "impatient romantic" who ignores part of a conflict after being aware of the whole. (Not the "lazy romantic" who is not aware in the first place.) Or we may put the matter thus: in terms of Auden's views of the poet, he is a non-romantic man who becomes a romantic poet.

The question is in the long run quite simple. If you will look at the greater poems of Yeats—the Byzantium poems or the Crazy Jane series—you will see the same double focus on irreconcilable opposites. But the opposition is conveyed in a structure of metaphor which retains the conflict:

That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea

and many other examples, one of them being the entire poem from which this line is quoted. Auden has a complex, even a very rich mind; yet his passion for autobiography brings him back always to the question: What does it mean to me? Perhaps he will not be able to tell us fully what it means to him until he no longer asks the question. Or maybe until he asks this question: What does it mean?

OTHER RECENT BOOKS:

JOSEPHINE MILES:

DELMORE SCHWARTZ: *Shenandoah.* New Directions (Poet of the Month).

Shenandoah, with its hell-mouth in the dining room, must be considered after all less as morality play than as eclogue. Any blunder in it seems not free and simple, but purposeful; and any speech in it not plain dramatic talk, but quotation. So there is most heartfeltedly, as in eclogue, the consciousness of a set-up; and we do not get nor, I judge, are supposed to get, any straight excitement from Elsie's *rushing* in and out and the baby's *howling.* These are quotations too.

Shenandoah as meditation or discussion seems to me an elegant job. It shows the East Cokerers the power of formalized action over abstraction, and supports our today's leading poetic lingo, in the mouth of Shenandoah extra clever and sad,

> As only Isaac Newton underwent
> The accidental apple's happy fall—

with the more standard (quoted) sadness of "How difficult Life is" and "He has come here to insult me and to insult an eight day old child." In other words, it lets its people, even its commentator, move in ceremonial just enough familiar to us, rather than generalizing upon the ceremonial. If this is moving it is so in obliquity, because we participate mainly as recognizers. S——— says to us always: Listen to this, what Walter Fish is going to remark; alas, you will know it; even my explanation. There is not one new shiny thing in the poem; though it is the poem of a child's naming, not one unlived future; so we can't get caught up in it. But that's all right if that wasn't Schwartz's job. The only spot I couldn't defend, if anybody should ask, is Shenandoah's last speech. I don't like it. It is too quick a note upon the rites, it is Shenandoah at his very worst, and if this fact is in itself a final irony I think it one too many.

But for the rest we have a meditation which is given life by the pathos of an all too well known dialogue, the magic of a name, the king who won't die, the young men who talk, and the steady burden of that talk: a set-piece, mostly good.

W. R. MOSES:

LOUISE BOGAN: *Poems and New Poems.* Scribners.

To a very perceptible extent, Louise Bogan's working area—her subject matter—is similar to that of Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elinor Wylie. If to say that is to indicate a considerable limitation, it is also to point the way to a difference greatly in Miss Bogan's favor. For, from the start, she has understood more clearly and remembered more constantly than Miss Millay or Miss Wylie that art and the feelings which are its raw material are both served best if the latter are held accountable to the law of the former. Hence she has practiced a selection of detail and an intellectual straightening out of material, and a precision of diction and of meter (not an inflexibility of meter), resulting in an unusually and admirably pure art.

The limitation remains. Miss Bogan's writing deals much with strong primary emotions; often shows a variety of ironic attitudes probably resultant from perceiving discrepancy between the strength of such emotions and the objective value of object or situation to which they attach. It is as though the effort to select, to pare down, to impose the rigors of just metrical form on such material, were often so great as to leave insufficient energy

for invention, for the creation of symbol, or "objective correlative," which might go farther than meter and diction alone can go in objectifying and evaluating emotion or attitude. Though in the course of the book there are numerous excursions away from it, the point of view remains on the whole throughout—anyhow it keeps recurring to—the deracinated personal-emotional. (The book, as its title hints, is made up of substantial selections from Miss Bogan's three earlier books, plus a number of new poems.) That statement of course is not damning, but presumably it is obvious wherein it is restrictive. The new poems, though to some extent they do depart from the established convention of the whole, are a scattered lot; some of them are very good, but they do not perceptibly work together to show the formation of a richer and more illuminating point of view than Miss Bogan started with eighteen years ago.

But the limitation has its limitation in turn. Twenty or more of the poems show, in addition to technical skill, a degree of invention, and an "inevitability," which would make them a good reward for reading the book even if the rest of it had nothing to offer.

KERKER QUINN:

GEORGE BARKER: *Selected Poems.* The Macmillan Company.

F. T. PRINCE: *Poems.* New Directions.

One would expect the war, with its appeal for cultural ties across the Atlantic and its curtailing of London publishing, to flood the market with American editions of young British poets conspicuous in the late 1930's. Yet Barker and Prince are the first to be introduced by American firms since the start of the war. Why not Empson, too, and Heppenstall, Madge, Gascoyne, and others?

Barker has, to be sure, produced a larger, showier volume than could be accumulated from the poetry of anyone else since Auden. And no doubt he will find a fuller response in the United States than would his contemporaries: he lives in New York now, contributes to the *New Republic,* can offer three "American Odes" and twenty-seven "Pacific Sonnets" of recent date, and—as a *Criterion* reviewer pointed out several years ago—appears to be more American in his technique than Allen Tate, who is American. Barker strives for noise, shock, color, fullness to the point of congestion. Never has so much violence of image and rhetoric been packed into a page. Daring full rhymes, half-rhymes, inner rhymes, assonance, dissonance, alliteration; ellipsis, inversion, chiasis, parallelism, repetition; apostrophe, personification, allusion, coinage, joke ("Merman Melville" is the worst), explosive and bizarre adjective, stretched conceit—the catalogue needn't be extended, for already it must be clear that the reader has trouble keeping his mind on what Barker has to say. "Roses are red" would not be quickly intelligible in the Cave of the Winds. Since the individual devices are oftener successful in themselves than not, improvement of the poetry would seem to involve, simply, some judicious pruning and modulating. Keats' principle of fine excess needn't backfire this way.

The dozen poems retained from Barker's first book, published in 1935, are the most flamboyant; the two later divisions of *Selected Poems* show a limited degree of control operating. On the whole, the second division, *Lament and Triumph,* published in England in 1940, is the best. The epistles and elegies and "holy poems" and the "Death of Yeats" have more substantial subjects and more structural integrity than Barker's verse before or since. Certainly they have fewer banal, burdened lines than turn up in the exposition and satire of the third section, *New Poems.* The characteristic "1st American Ode" abounds in objectionable lines like "I move like the crab in a booming house of doom, / And like the Comanche with an ear to the ground / Hear the horses of damnation careering down the future" . . . "Or shall I see / Love and its supplements, greater than Roosevelt, / Institute the foundations of hope? O progeny / Of simple Walt, Love, Love is always ample." Barker's unevenness may be attributed to temperament (driving, uncheckable energy compounded with

laziness), to an unsure ear, or even to a theory of poetic composition (see his essay called "Therefore All Poems Are Elegies" and note his admiration for Blake).

Barker is a romantic in theme and tone as well as in exuberance of expression. But he has advanced beyond the baroque-romanticism of the most ambitious poem in the 1935 group, "Elegy Anticipating Death," a charnel-house, body-vs.-soul allegory—the eeriest jelly of worms and eyeballs since Gautier's *Comédie de la Mort.* He has contrived a *Childe Harold* approach, mingling personal sentiment and sensation with personal observation of nature and society. Since it is personal, it is largely new; since the person is interesting, so largely is the poetry.

To read F. T. Prince along with Barker is to dispel forever any notion one might have about the young British poets as a group or school. Prince is interested in precision of phrase, serenity of tone, bareness of imagery, avoidance of tricks, the use of monosyllabic and conventional adjectives. His subjects are narrower than Barker's, and are developed narrowly rather than broadly: his complications tend to delve down, Barker's to swing out and extend the surface. At his best—in "An Epistle to a Patron," for instance—he writes as you wish some late eighteenth-century poet like Cowper had been able to write—tempering Dryden's dry, competent verse-essays with the sentimental, relaxing lyricism of Collins and the school of sensibility. The delicate, bookish meditations that make up his first American volume are more mature and finished than Barker's work, but carry less suggestion that he can develop into a major poet.

BOYD CARTER:

LOUIS ARAGON: *The Century Was Young.* Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

Since Balzac it has been fashionable for French novelists to systematize and to present a vast personal and social experience in a sequential ensemble. That Louis Aragon, once a leader in nihilistic Dadaism and logic-disdaining Surrealism, should abandon the subconscious and take his place among the masters (Balzac, Zola, Proust, Roger Martin du Gard, Romains, Duhamel) of the serial social novel is a tribute to the unquenchable thirst of French genius for neat logical arrangement. *The Century Was Young* is the third in the series bearing the general title of *The Real World.* Like its already translated predecessors, *The Bells of Basel* and *Residential Quarter,* it is an independent unit and does not presuppose a knowledge of the other units.

The events narrated (1889-1914) pivot around Pierre Mercadier, a wealthy member of the middle class, who abandons his wife and children and sets out in search of the freedom which family life and restraining conventions have withheld from him. He disdains politics and loathes teaching; he cannot identify himself with the prosaic complacency of his own class, yet hates the proletariat; the love denied him by his wife is likewise denied him by other women. After ten years of wandering he returns to Paris penniless, is forced to accept the generosity of a former colleague, and eventually falls into the clutches of an old harlot. Pierre Mercadier exemplifies the aimless kind of human driftwood which, cut off from the main currents of purposeful human life, eddies and disintegrates in the lonely pools of individualism.

This novel does something which no history book could do: it gives a human meaning to the social and political phenomena which demobilized Pierre Mercadier and his associates and isolated them from co-operative creative effort. In Mercadier is summarized an epoch bankrupt of idealism. In the reviewer's opinion the only character in French fiction who approaches his moral demobilization is Frederic Moreau in Flaubert's *Sentimental Education.* But whereas Moreau is a post-generation romanticist, incompetent to chart for himself a purpose in life, and prefers, therefore, to drift aimlessly, Mercadier is the victim of forces infinitely more complex: Darwinism, Marxism, nationalism, Socialism, anti-Semitism, cleric-

alism, and the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. And the war which began at the end of this novel did not erase from our midst the Pierre Mercadiers!

The author, like Balzac and Zola, involves wide social strata in his fiction, cuts breadthwise and consolidates his character relationships like Gide, and dives deep into consciousness, with meanderings often as subtle as Proust's. Though the reader of his earlier novels had the impression sometimes—not very often—that the subject was dictating to the character, here Aragon has attained that point of artistic equilibrium wherein the social situation flows through and animates the character. His extraordinary power of assimilating the raw materials of fiction has been augmented by the ability to give his characters what the French call *âme.*

W. McNEIL LOWRY:

ALDOUS HUXLEY: *Grey Eminence.* Harper & Brothers.

A new book by Aldous Huxley is always impatiently awaited by a wide number of readers, but for a variety of reasons. Those who are interested primarily in the mind of Huxley, in the transition of Huxley's philosophical allegiance from one focal point to another, will find *Grey Eminence* most interesting .

The critic of Huxley might have been pardoned for doubting the permanency of the mystic way which seemed only partly assimilated in *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Ends and Means* and of the quietistic withdrawal from life spoken of so blandly by Mr. Propter in *After Many a Summer. Grey Eminence* should dispel any doubt. Father Joseph, the Capuchin friar who helped Richelieu prolong the Thirty Years' War for the glory of France, confusing France's glory with that of God, is condemned for attempting to make the best of two hostile worlds—the world of the trained mystic and that of the power politician. The fact that Father Joseph understood the arduous technique of the contemplative makes him an excellent *bête noire* for Huxley's purposes. But even more significant of Huxley's own position in 1941 is his sweeping condemnation of almost all large-scale activity, particularly of the political variety. Only the trained mystic can aid in social amelioration without reaping evil results along with the good. As examples, Huxley cites the work of the Benedictines in the Dark Ages and that of the Quakers in more modern times. Where Huxley stands in relation to the present mobilization of the European intellectuals for the propagation of a democratic faith is evident from his astonishing statement in *The Saturday Review of Literature* (October 25, 1941). Only two ways, he says, have ever been discovered by which men may build a bridge between idealistic theory and actual practice, the way of the mystic and Mr. F. M. Alexander's psycho-physical technique for the use of the self. Huxley would combine the two for an education rational and moral, an education through which all men might be elevated into an "experience of ultimate reality." The mind of Aldous Huxley has found what bids fair to remain its abiding home.

HOWARD BLAKE:

ROBINSON JEFFERS: *Be Angry at the Sun.* Random House.

The blurb prefacing the latest of many books of verse by the so-called Sophocles of California, says that his "position as America's foremost poet grows constantly more secure." If this be even an approximate truth, we ought carefully to examine what Jeffers has put in the book. Violence, of course, a suicide motivated by a growing schizophrenia and a wife's adultery. A Masque with Hitler as the *pièce de résistance* (the place is Endor and the Witch officiates and there are three masked figures from the other side). And some shorter bits.

What does it all come to: is Mr. Jeffers the big boy or is he, really, a short story writer with one plot, a moralist with eternity so present that morality simply can't be bothered with, save to point its absence, somehow its necessity? Facility is the word and the worm.

Jeffers has changed a little since his heartier and slightly more imagistic earlier books. Those books seemed to say: maybe this is too fulsome, profligate; maybe no lines really will bear close attention as *poetry* or even as terminate wisdom; maybe I am not at all final, but I may point towards that precision, that dryness of speech, if you like, which indicates that I find any speech difficult, so that each word must do full time and bear a high brunt, each image spell final distillation, each plot chart inevitable and ranging dilemmas (for that is my bent). This is not what happened. Mr. Jeffers continues to tell his hawk-haunted, man-foiled story, but the language is loose and the lines must accumulate for their effect, if any, and the "message" has gained nothing except a novel (for him) bibliography. Mr. Jeffers has "discovered" Oswald Spengler and a philosophy for his frustrations. This is too bad. Mr. Jeffers is, doubtless, incompetent to question Spengler; he must accept him *in toto.* Gone is the intuition, easy enough, surely, to destroy: the buzzard is documented.

Well, what about the clothes in which Oswald is dressed? Age has, as usual, chastened whatever prodigality of image. But has Mr. Jeffers attained concision (he needs it so very much) from a multiplicity of awareness and a hesitance to shoot off his face too soon because his matter is eternity and man is somewhere in it? No, not at all. There *is* a new precision is here, but it is not Mr. Jeffers'. He has had an experience: the reading of *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Family Reunion* and, of course, "The Hollow Men."

Maybe the image will save the day. That is always the poet's certificate of rightness, his proof of immediate apprehension and, sometimes, the very poetry of the thing. Mr. Jeffers used the hawk and the ferret and the cat and the centaur and the hungry sea, but he never put them to nice use. And now the hawk still screams and the mountains brood and the man has a ferret face, and the image which tells at all is no image but a phrase like "poor wraths" or an Eliotic line.

Perhaps all of Jeffers' tall talk with a plot is too bad, too bad for American literature. Perhaps not. His personal feelings aside, it may not be so bad that he has written as he has. He is not at all a bad warning. Big themes require big preparation, indefatigable education. The taste and the learning and the personal rigor and the final, tortured, nice inditing are, through their absence, implied necessities. The whole shebang comes down to a pervasive immaturity and its accompanying habit of being too soon made glad.

KENNETH ANDREWS:

KARL DETZER: *Carl Sandburg.* Harcourt, Brace

This newspaperman's account of another newspaperman is what one might expect—a concise, uncritical, and over-simplified article designed to fit all the requirements, if not the space-limitation, of the Sunday Supplement. It is accurate and dignified reporting, with the proper "human interest" of a successful interview. But when the writer assumes the feathers of a full-fledged biographer, he resorts to uncomplicated interpretation and a primitive use of quotation. He finds the complete explanation of Sandburg's liberalism in the poet's birth among honest but poor people, from whom many non-liberals are nonetheless sprung. He sees Sandburg's love for the prairie as merely the inevitable result of his having grown up on it, although many writers have nonetheless fled from it to the city. He illustrates the greatness of Sandburg's poetry with "Fog," and explains the complex magnificence of the Lincoln biography with similar simplicity.

A person not very familiar with Sandburg will discover much in this book to inform him. But it will be of no use to him if he wants a satisfactory study of Sandburg's growth as a poet, an insight into his uniqueness among living American writers, and an overdue discrimination between the genius of his work and the ham of it.

HOWARD NUTT:

HARRY BROWN: *The Poem of Bunker Hill.* Scribners.

MARK VAN DOREN: *The Mayfield Deer.* Henry Holt.

The Poem of Bunker Hill is a poem of action and definitely a piece to be read aloud. Otherwise, the lanky lines, which seem to the poet to be equally suitable for recording panic and prayer, and the general lack of compactness make the reading drag. But suddenly we are jerked up by a rush of verbs or reassured by such lines as these:

> To the man in the ranks war was a confusion,
> That continued discursively to a disputed end,
> And that sent him home empty-handed to a house that had fallen in.

Or exasperated by such as these:

> Curses, complaints, and all the common talk
> Of laboring men whose privilege it is to grouse
> About the abuses they like to believe they suffer.

The best of the book is in the section called "The Battle." Here we take leave of the Greek gods and penny-ante philosophers of the first few pages for a hell of a fight. That day was not like any other day, and this poem is not much like any of the many other poems currently being attempted on American historical subjects. The battle is fast and vivid and easy reading. The section should become a textbook favorite.

The narrative itself evinces a thorough job of research and is a valid attempt to use from that great reservoir of historic material we have at hand. It is more than a matter of datum and date, yet it is that sort of embellishment of history that lends itself to ridicule. If Harry Brown were reviewing *The Poem of Bunker Hill,* he could be very witty and nasty if he chose to be: by writing the poem, he at least escapes his own stones.

The Mayfield Deer is a page from an Illinois county history, about an old hunter's search for his pet doe which a youth has shot in order to get for his sweetheart the brass bell and flannel neckband that the deer wore around her neck as evidence of tameness. The whole countryside goes into a dither lest the hunter discover the boy's wanton act and put a bullet through him, as he has sworn he'd do. It isn't much of an incident to hang 272 pages of blank verse upon, but poems longer and better than this one have been written about frailer themes.

Van Doren's narrative is really "psychological," almost in the Robinsonian sense. But that's not what's the matter with the book. The trouble lies in the writing itself, the mechanical padding out of the blank verse lines, the unnatural and evasive language of these backwoods folk. It's unfortunate that the blurb at the front of the book leads one to expect an historical undertaking—"part of the rivers and prairies and forests which we know, and of the people who moved steadily westward to settle the wilderness."

BLAKE NEVIUS:

JEREMY INGALLS: *The Metaphysical Sword.* Yale University Press.

A decade from now, when critics are confidently classifying the poets of the forties, Miss Ingalls may be placed among the advance guard of those who, in offering a panacea for their afflicted times, dealt unashamedly with religious themes and experiences. Because she has refused to make of her religion a wall between herself and the spectacle of destruction, because she successfully combines the spirit of primitive Christianity with the hardened temper of the realist and consequently has been able to reconcile the present conflict

with the idea of a controlled universe, there is a heartening conviction in whatever she has to say: "The road beyond violence will be taken / That we go between the legs of Hell to find it / Is little enough and not enough to say." Although this attitude provides the necessary centrality in her work, hers is not exclusively a poetry of faith; she is equally at her best in straight headline commentary, in the indulgent satire of "Assembly" and the crisp epigrammatic fables.

The collection includes one rather conventional sonnet in the Shakespearean form and an interesting modern ballad, but except in the longer poems the author works most frequently with irregular verse-forms and gains some of her best effects with short-line stanzas, where her feeling for terse, challenging statement is exploited. Only once or twice, notably in the alliterative, rhetorical "The Grail," is the compression overdone. Granted that there is no more dangerous indoor sport than trying to spot influences in the work of a new poet, my bet is that Miss Ingalls must have read Whitman some time ago, Hopkins and Yeats more recently; even so, her work is still very much her own.

PAUL LANDIS:

ROBERT FITZGERALD: *Oedipus at Colonus,* an English version. Harcourt, Brace.

DUDLEY FITTS: *More Poems from the Palatine Anthology.* New Directions.

He who has translated a Greek tragedy has given hostages to fortune. He has, in what Mr. Fitzgerald seems sometimes to consider the diction of Sophocles, stuck out his neck. No translation can possibly please all readers, and none, I doubt, has ever thoroughly satisfied the translator. On many points both of theory and practice this version is to be commended: there is none of the familiar translator's jargon and little torturing of English idiom; *thee's* and *thou's* are gone, and with them their unspeakable verbs in *st*; nor is there any spurious Tennysonian ornament. In particular, the lovely chorus descriptive of Colonus and the magnificent narrative of Oedipus's passing are excellently rendered. Nevertheless, as a whole, the version does not satisfy.

To point out the defects and establish one's case would demand a small essay on translation. In the circumstances a few examp'es of the most serious will have to suffice. For the dialogue Mr. Fitzgerald has wisely chosen the "iambic pentameter, or five stress line," but there are too many lines like,

Of the bloody extinction of your eyes

which no one can speak in that rhythm. The verse as a whole lacks firmness and many lines are without rhythmical character. Recognizing the difficulty of translating the restrained Sophoclean diction, Mr. Fitzgerald in practice lapses too often into vulgarity of idiom:

If you could do it, our city would be finished.

Perhaps the best known sentiment in the play becomes:

Not to be born beats all philosophy.

Inaccuracy and vulgarity in conjunction! Theseus, with more than kingly courtesy and most unregal rhythm, commands his soldiers:

One of you will please go on the double.

Finally, while approving Mr. Fitzgerald's practice of eliminating as many Greek names as possible, one must object to such a rendering as:

If God endures; if his son's word is true.

There is an inescapable, if unintentional, suggestion of Christianity. Zeus's paternity was so unrestrained that Phoebus owed to it little of his distinction.

Mr. Fitts has done his slighter though no less difficult task with more formal dexterity. This is well, because the poetry of the Anthology is often entirely that of form. Unfortunately, even elegance of expression cannot wholly redeem the triviality of much of that famous collection. Mr. Fitts, like his originals, is happiest in the tender or noble epitaphs. Even his verse is hardly up to the task of rendering the paradox of a brook pebble or gutter stone cut like a diamond.

These two poets used to collaborate in translating Greek tragedy. Now that we see them separately, we can only regret that the Palatine Anthology should gain at the expense of Sophocles.

STANLEY FLETCHER:

S. I. HAYAKAWA: *Language in Action.* Harcourt, Brace.

In a world deluged with words, where wars are fought for ideologies and propaganda is half the ammunition, the realization that the nature of language itself contributes to human chaos came inevitably. The idea of semantics took firm root in the twenties, and the last decade has seen a widespread development of interest within academic groups. Such inquiry could attain little momentum as a combative power until its direct usefulness against the forces which push the average citizen around could be made apparent, and the popular mind and vocabulary stimulated. That task has been tried. Stuart Chase lent his reputation to an attempt at popular interpretation of several pioneer works, but his enthusiastic treatment of abstractions not merely as tools to be suspected, but as utter and unqualified nonsense, appears to have alienated much of the very interest he intended to arouse. At more recent date, Hugh Walpole has offered a pedantic and clumsy paraphrase of Ogden and Richards

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which, far from casting the light of semantic inquiry in the direction of the newsreel and contemporary chaos, turned into a plug for Basic English. Semanticist Hayakawa, Canadian-born of Japanese parents, educated in American universities, is the first to speak in the more familiar tongue and to offer a weapon, fitting the common hand, against the tyranny of words.

The book triumphantly transcends its textbook form, for Hayakawa is unique among teachers. His exposition is presented on no blackboard. His text is the constant verbal clamor of conversation, ballyhoo, newsprint, radio, movie, stage, marketstreet and lunchwagon; the entire contemporary scene is his documentation. His title is literal. He exhibits language in action: language uniting the human race in cooperative endeavor, bridging with bonds of sympathy barriers of space and time, making possible what tenuous control mankind has achieved over circumstances and destiny; but language, also, that same language, inherited from primordial ancestors, umbilical to savagery, still evincing today the impress of primitive spirit, still today infecting our minds channeling our thinking, perverting our behavior to barbarism even as we blindly manipulate it with what we conceive to be enlightened intent. He methodically illustrates how an unconscious naive trust in words traps the most intelligent into confusion, gullibility, frustration, atavistic thought and action, and modes of behavior questionably adult or sane, which only a conscious orientation in all dealings with language can obviate. But it is no cry of woe, woe. He projects a technic for accomplishing the re-orientation. "Applications" offered in illustration at chapter-ends set the mind in stimulated search for more. One is constantly stopped short in chagrined revaluation of pet notions, in wondering question of what hitherto seemed obvious, in amused contemplation of a new perspective on habitual gestures. An apt symbolism integrates the theoretical structure; ten aphoristic rules summarize the proposed technic into handy form for the mental pocket. The demonstration is provocative in the extreme, and eminently practical. Some fifty colleges have already used the book (in an earlier off-set edition) as a supplementary rhetoric text. But, as its sponsorship by the Book of the Month Club would suggest, it is of far more than class-room appeal—or the classroom is bounded only by the two oceans.

Contributors to the vigorous literature of semantics have come from many independent fields: linguistics, philosophy, psychology, science, criticism, law, economics, etc. But their influence was bound to remain limited until the idea of semantics could be presented in terms communicable across the lunch counter. That, in what purports to be a freshman textbook, is Hayakawa's accomplishment.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912
of Accent, published quarterly at Urbana, Illinois, for October 1, 1941.

State of Illinois, County of Champaign. Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared W. McNeil Lowry, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor of Accent and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

That the names and addresses of the publisher and editor are: Publisher, Accent, Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois; Editors, Kerker Quinn, W. M. Lowry, W. R. Moses, Charles Shattuck, Donald Hill, Robert Bauer, Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois. There is neither a managing editor nor a business manager.

That the owners are: Kerker Quinn, W. M. Lowry, W. R. Moses, Charles Shattuck, Donald Hill, Robert Bauer, Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

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W. McNEIL LOWRY

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1941.

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(My commission expires Nov. 17, 1942)